



### **A message from Gordon McKay, Chair of Labour Link Scotland**

It is only four months ago that to governments, public sector workers were seen as low skilled, low value and of low importance. Now we are 'essential and brilliant workers' who government ministers stand and applaud. The reality however is that nothing has changed in how the powerful see us. Our members have been let down over PPE, over testing and over safety.

With all these dangers our members are still putting others first. UNISON has always known it is our members who hold our communities together, that it is public services that protect us and that it is by our collective efforts we win through.

I want to say thank you to every UNISON member who works in public services across Scotland because when people needed you, you were there for them, not just making lives better but saving lives.

I also want to thank every one of our members who is involved in any way and works for our Labour Link fund, it is because of you we ensure we hold governments to account and increase the chances of Labour Governments in Scotland and the UK that will put public services, jobs, and social justice at the heart of our country. Not only have you worked for the public but your campaigning has saved the jobs of our members, protected their pay and kept them safer.

You don't however just have my thanks; you have my promise that the values of our union and of public service is at the heart of everything I and UNISON Labour Link do.

UNISON Labour Link Scotland Working for a Better Future.

### **Labour Link delivering in Parliament**

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic UNISON Labour Link has been working closely with Labour MSPs to ensure UNISON concerns are given an airing in Parliament. On 7<sup>th</sup> May Labour Link reps met with the UNISON group of MSPs Sarah Boyack, Alex Rowley, David

Stewart and Rhoda Grant. We discussed the ongoing crisis and how it was impacting on UNISON members, including:

- issues around H&S and massive problems with PPE;
- we shared our letter to Integrated Joint Boards about the Scottish Living Wage and maintenance of earnings during the crisis;
- the failings of the care homes model in Scotland;
- suspension of 1140 hours target for early years;
- impact on Social Work which was already in crisis in many areas before crisis;
- Impact on utilities workers;
- pay for health workers;
- we agreed to arrange a meeting with Labour's health team.



### **Meeting with Scottish Labour's health team – Kay Sillars reports**

Scottish Labour's health team met with members of UNISON's Scottish health team for a wide ranging and constructive online discussion in early June on the challenges the NHS faces under COVID-19. We also outlined our key issues as we move to rebuild the NHS in the future. Taking part were:

Monica Lennon MSP, Labour health spokesperson and Deputy Convenor of the COVID-19 Committee of the Scottish Parliament; Lewis MacDonald MSP: Convenor Health and Sport Committee Scottish Parliament; David Stewart MSP, Member Health and Sport Committee and Tam Waterson, Willie Duffy, Kay Sillars and Gordon McKay of UNISON.

Willie Duffy, UNISON head of health, outlined the issues that UNISON has been raising at regular meetings with the Cabinet Secretary and the NHS Scotland Scottish Terms And Conditions Committee. Including PPE provision and training for staff in its safe use and infection control. He emphasised the pressure that staff are under working long hours, many with underlying health conditions and the challenges they face trying to look after their own families.

A lot of the discussion focused on care homes and care at home where finding solutions and protecting staff and patients have proved most challenging. The private, independent and voluntary sector is now the focus of public scrutiny as never before and it is clear that the current situation is not sustainable. UNISON reiterated our long standing policy that the safest and most cost effective route to deliver care is through the public sector. The Labour

team stated that they were still committed to the National Care Service outlined in 2019 manifesto.

The NHS has coped with COVID-19 but only because so many services have been paused to free up staff. The next challenge is how to reintroduce services safely. There was also discussion and support for proper recognition of the efforts of health staff through increased pay.

There was a great deal of interest from the Labour team who welcomed hearing directly from UNISON about the issues members face.



**Billy Stewart – National LL Committee Rep writes:**

This has been my first year on the National Labour Link Committee. It has been challenging to say the least. Since attending my first meeting in November, we've had: a general election, an election post-mortem, leadership elections and we are now in the midst of a pandemic.

I have taken my socialist values in to discussions at the NLLC and hope to continue to do so. As Scotland's Labour Link rep I am keen to hear form LL members.

I completely agree with the UNISON Scotland position on a second independence referendum. The Scottish Parliament's mandate on this question must not be vetoed, and people must have their say. It is clearly an issue in workplaces and communities, which has been a barrier to a Labour manifesto that offered real change for our members.

I joined the Labour Party Young Socialists 36 years ago and have been active in UNISON for 25 years. In that time, we have faced some of the worst attacks on workers in our Labour history. I didn't join a supporters-club, there's football teams for that-I joined a labour movement and the party, was for me, a stepping-stone towards a socialist transformation of society. Everything I have learned and experienced in that time has reinforced that perspective.

In this coming period; our members in particular, will likely face attacks on pay, conditions and pensions. Indeed, trade unions themselves face further attacks from a Tory government that has no time for the democratic workplace.

Despite our members being on the frontline of the pandemic, this government just like the last, will inevitably put fat cats and bankers first and demand our members pay the bill for this pandemic. Yet if this pandemic has taught us anything, it's that economic planning and intervention - not the free market that gets the nation through, reminiscent of the effort at home during WW2. This is a clear vindication of the public ownership and proper funding of public services policies, advocated within Labours 2019 manifesto.

The struggles we face, sisters and brothers, is not separate from Black Lives Matter. The struggle against racism and fascism is integral to our movement and I call on all UNISON members, to come together and mobilise resistance against this cancer in our society.

The national Labour Link Committee will have a conference call meeting in the coming weeks. I would appreciate any contact with any UNISON Labour Link members in Scotland. On this vital UNSON committee I'll continue to make sure UNISON Scotland is heard. Stay safe and get organised.

### **Scottish Executive of Scottish Labour Party – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

The SLP held its first online meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June. Maggie Cook and Simon Macfarlane represented UNISON. The first part of the meeting was a presentation by David Conway and Linda Stewart on the review they had been asked to conduct in to the 2019 General Election. This was an interim update on their work, it is understood the report will be shared with CLPs in due course.

The key recommendations included:

- Clarity of our constitutional position is required, this needs worked through, not just yes/no, avoiding jargon and remote terms/concepts;
- Build on strength of policies in manifesto;
- Get a realistic and focussed campaign strategy;
- Better use of data to inform strategy;
- Improved digital campaigning;
- Get operational campaign right.

The initial findings were broadly welcomed and David and Linda thanked for their work.

Next there was extensive discussion on a paper on constitutional issues, there was much to welcome in the paper but overall once amended it was not one that UNISON could support given the clear line against a second referendum without reference to this being a matter for the Scottish Parliament to determine. The final paper can be read [here](#).

Then other big discussion at the meeting was how the party would select and order the candidates for the regional lists in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections. UNISON supported the ongoing need to take proactive steps to ensure the Scottish party maintained its strong track record of delivering at least 50/50 women representation. UNISON also again called for work to be undertaken to enable Scottish Labour to field a more diverse range of candidates in 2021, including those from BAME, LGBTQ+ and working class/trade union

backgrounds. In the end the SEC determined to carry out further work on this and reconvene ASAP to determine the approach.

Selections for constituency candidates in those seats still to be selected will begin in July. The UK Party is currently working on developing an online selection process.

### **Calling all budding politicians, especially those from underrepresented groups!**

As you will see from the SEC report the Party will soon be selecting candidates for the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021. Labour Link is keen to support UNISON members to put themselves forward as candidates, particularly women and those from underrepresented groups. If you would like to discuss this please don't hesitate to get in touch with Simon Macfarlane 07703 194132 [s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk) There will also be council elections in 2022 and we need UNISON members to come forward to stand as anti austerity pro public services candidates.

To support people interested in becoming more politically active, not just in standing as a candidate Labour Link will be working with other unions affiliated to the Labour Party to run a political education course in Scotland. More details will be publicised in due course.

### **Morning Star**

Labour Link would encourage you to read and support the Morning Star. The labour and trade union movements' paper is telling the story of Covid-19 from a worker's perspective. At a time of so much uncertainty and unreliable news, the Star is an invaluable resource to assist working people in getting organised. It needs your support, why not encourage your branch to take out a digital subscription, <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/>

### **UNISON members have been speaking up in Scottish Labour's After the Lockdown series on online meetings**

UNISON members Pam Duncan-Glancy, Maddy Kirkman and Labour Link Committee member Kathleen Kennedy took part in a discussion on disability issues. Here Kathleen reports:

I was invited to take part in an After the Lockdown call on disability issues and a subsequent follow up call.

I was able to talk about reasonable adjustments which are going to be more necessary and where Reasonable Adjustments Passports are so vital for disabled employees. Both in the Lockdown Call with other panellists with Richard Leonard and in the follow up call the Social Model of Disability and the Medical model of Disability was mentioned. I explained as I was asked in the follow up call, what was the difference which is simply put, under the Medical model which went out of date in the 70s the disabled person is seen as the problem and needs to adapt where in the Social Model it is the environment and other people who need to change.

On the follow up call we spoke about how important it is that reasonable adjustments are thought about now and not waiting till after the Lockdown. I also spoke about the 2 events

that were coming up one being Disability History Month and the Year of the Disability Worker both of which Labour Scotland is going to look into how they can support these.



*Kathleen Kennedy – top left; Maddy Kirkman – centre left; Pam Duncan-Glancy - centre*

These are key events to use to highlight how far disabled people have come but also barriers stopping them progressing further.

And finally we spoke on the follow up call about how necessary it is to have people with disabilities involved with CLPs.

If you are a Labour Party member interested in networking around disability issues please email [leo\\_plumb@labour.org.uk](mailto:leo_plumb@labour.org.uk)

### **UNISON's Deborah Clarke reports on After the lockdown: Building a National Care Service**

I was invited to represent UNISON on a Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June to talk about Social Care with Richard Leonard and Andy Burnham.

I talked about what has been happening to members on the frontline of care since the pandemic hit. GMB and UNITE along with a front line care worker shared similar stories. The lack of PPE, the unacceptable number of deaths in Care Homes and no sick pay for staff featured heavily with a clear understanding that the current system was fundamentally flawed and as a result thousands of vulnerable people had died including several care workers.

There was good debate throughout the meeting and it was clear that we must all work together to build a new social care model that rewards care staff for the valuable work they do. It was clear that there was no place for private providers who have been taking money out of the system to off shore bank accounts.

Now more than ever we are reminded of the true value of care workers. We must remember that quality care has continued throughout the pandemic with superhuman stories emerging

every day from the frontline despite the challenges and at significant personal risk. Only now are they referred to as essential workers, only now has society woken up to the reality of the vital role these mostly low paid women undertake.



*Deborah Clarke top left*

Many care workers have no access to occupational sick pay or any death in service benefit. Given that background it highlights just how incredible they are. Warm words from government saying they are equal to their NHS colleagues does not mean anything unless translated into rewarding them as professionals for the skills and abilities they bring.

UNISON will continue to call on the Scottish Government and employer's to come together to recognise and reward this workforce under the Fair Work umbrella at the earliest opportunity under a new social care model.

***UNISON Labour Link Scotland thanks all UNISON members for their efforts to keep us all safe at this time. Collectivism not individualism has and will continue to make the difference.***

***United we stand, divided we fall!***

***An injury to one is an injury to all!***

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