

UP FRONT

Highland Healthcare Branch Newsletter

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February 2021

<http://www.unisonhighlandhealthcare.co.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/unisonhighlandhealthcare/>

BAPTISM OF FIRE

It has been an unprecedented year as the new Branch Secretary of UNISON Highland Healthcare Branch. Unfortunately, I have not been able to travel to Inverness or any other areas because of the restrictions and this is quite right as we must keep ourselves and others safe. COVID has been the front, back and centre of everyone's lives across Scotland and as Branch Secretary I have been involved in many meetings working with our colleagues in UNISON to make sure the correct PPE & Guidance is out there for all our members. I must thank all our officers, stewards, and Regional Organisers for all their input in keeping the NHS a safe place to work as well as supporting all our hard-working carers in the community. I am pleased to say that UNISON has recruited and trained more Health & Safety reps to assist with ensuring we keep our workplaces as safe as we possibly can for all our members.



UNISON has been working hard with our NHS Pay Campaign #One Team2K, we feel this is a fairer way for the Scottish Government to show their gratitude for all the hard work across NHS Scotland and would benefit our lowest paid workers in the NHS, those workers such as domestic, catering, and portering staff who have worked tirelessly to keep the NHS running, and all our Healthcare workers who have kept our NHS from bursting at the seams. I personally thank every one of you.

UNISON Highland Healthcare Branch will be having a virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) this year and I would like all our members to **join us at 3.00 pm or 7.00 pm on Thursday 4 March 2021.**

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank our Branch Chair, Anne Campbell, who makes my job easier, and all the staff at the Inverness UNISON office for their hard work behind the scenes and who have kept our UNISON Highland Healthcare Branch going even though the office has been closed.

Finally I would like to say to all our members this has been a tough year and we are not out of the woods yet, but I do feel there is some light at the end of the tunnel, so please stay safe, show kindness to each other in these very stressful times, we are all in this together.

DAWN MACDONALD, Branch Secretary



BRANCH CHAIR

My name is Anne Campbell; I am the UNISON Highland Healthcare Branch Chair and a workplace representative. I am also a member of the UNISON Nursing Sector Committee and the UNISON Health Committee. My base is in the County

Community Hospital, Inver-

gordon where my day job is as a mental health nurse. This is my first year as Branch Chair having been Vice Chair for many years. When our Branch Chair Etta Mackay stood down she left huge shoes to fill, fortunately she is still around to give advice and support.

It has been a challenging but worthwhile first year, with COVID and the related stress on health & social care staff

and services influencing our daily routines and work practices. These front page photos with Dawn MacDonald, Branch Secretary, are a good depiction of our UNISON branch meetings, we have become very adept at holding online meetings and seeing each other virtually. Our contact with UNISON members is the most important thing we do as a union and we are here to provide support and advice to you. We are in the process of arranging member's virtual meetings via TEAMS and I would love for you to attend, please look out for the dates which we will email to you.

COVID continues to affect our lives both as individuals and as a care service; I firmly believe we will get through this. As always we are stronger together working as one team. Please take care of yourself and each other, don't hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or need support.

ANNE CAMPBELL

NHS Highland Culture Programme

You may remember that, not long off two years ago now, the Sturrock Report was published with regard to some significant failings in the culture in NHS Highland, and experience of some staff with regard to bullying and other inappropriate behaviour.

This is a quick update on some of the things that have happened since then, and the ongoing work in NHS Highland, which UNISON (and other trade unions) are involved in.

It's worth pointing out that some of the actions so far have been the creation of the "Healing Process" (for current and ex members of staff), the establishment of the Guardian service (to support members of staff to raise concerns) and the setting up of the Employee Assistance Programme (which provides a wide range of support and advice).

Going forward though, there is still a lot to do, and the work has been divided up into a number of work streams, with some information as follows (this is not a priority order):

Priority 1: Vision, Values and Behaviours

The purpose of this priority is to define and embed the new NHS Highland vision, and roll-out and embed the NHS Scotland values across the organisation. The team accountable for delivering this priority has now met twice and a term of reference has been agreed.

Priority 2: Civility Saves

The purpose of this priority is to define and test an approach to rolling out the concepts of Civility Saves Lives (for example, call it out with compassion and the identification and training of second messengers) across teams in the organisation; through a train the trainer approach.

(If you're not aware of what this process is, it's about very informal and very local resolutions of disputes/issues within teams. It's got great potential to help improve the way we work together).

Priority 3: Leadership and Management Development

The purpose of this priority is to define and deliver

a suite of learning and support for Managers across the organisation, to ensure that all Managers both understand and are fully capable of fulfilling their management responsibilities.

Priority 4: People Processes

The purpose of this priority is to work in partnership to improve the use of information and early resolution, as well as improve the record keeping, speed and effectiveness of the core people processes and deliver a person-centred approach.

(This is a key priority for UNISON and something we have been raising for a long time).

Priority 5: Root-cause analysis/diagnostic (Organisational Learning)

The purpose of this priority is to use all the organisational learning available, and validate with colleagues, in order to understand where and how

things have gone wrong in the past, to ensure that our actions will effectively address the causes of the issues.

Priority 6: Culture Metrics and Tools

The purpose of this priority is to define and embed an approach to measuring and tracking culture at both an organisational and local level, to ensure the desired culture and behaviours across the organisation are embedded and staff experience improves.

There is other related work happening, including through the local group in Argyll and Bute, and also an NHS Highland review of recruitment processes.

Clearly communication and engagement around all of this is vital, and hopefully this article will contribute to that. There's lots to do, and achieving change won't take place over night.

We also want to hear from you, so if you have any comments or questions about all of this, please do get in touch with the Branch (email inverness.office@unison.co.uk).

ADAM PALMER,
Employee Director

Working From Home

This is another challenge! At the time of writing, NHS Highland has just over 1000 staff who are working from home (of course other employers which we also cover have staff doing this too).

We believe there are a lot more staff who could work from home - even for part of the working week, particularly in the context of Scottish Government statements around this, and issues around schools/childcare. One of the biggest issues is around availability of suitable equipment (particularly laptops). We are raising this, almost daily, with eHealth and management, although do recognise some of the difficulties around this. However, like all matters Covid-related, we would like to hear from you if you are needing help with this issue. It definitely helps to speak to your manager first, but we're happy to support.

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Don't forget if you are working from home you can claim tax relief to cover your additional expenses (heating/lighting etc).

You can claim by following this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>

## New General Secretary for UNISON



Christina McAnea, UNISON General Secretary

Christina McAnea has been elected as General Secretary of UNISON, the UK's largest union.

Commenting on her election, Christina said: "I'm so grateful to everyone who voted for me and for the trust placed in me. I become General Secretary at the most challenging time in recent history – both for our country and our public services.

Supporting public service workers through the pandemic, securing an early pay rise for NHS staff and ensuring the government backs down on its plans for an ill-judged pay freeze will be my immediate priorities.

Pushing for the funding and the political will to create a quality, affordable national care service, where staff are respected and paid fairly, comes close behind."

Christina was backed by UNISON Highland Healthcare Branch. Christina grew up in Drumchapel, a big council housing estate in Glasgow. She left school at 16 and worked in the civil service, the NHS and retail before going to university at the age of 22.

While Head of Health at the union, Christina played a key negotiating role in the national dispute over pensions, when up to two million public sector workers – including in Highland - took part in a day of action in late 2011. Three years later, she was the lead negotiator in the first national health strike in England in 25 years.

### UNISON listening to members

We appreciate the difficulties around speaking to a local rep at this time and some of the 'well kent' faces within UNISON are not out and about as much as we would hope to be at this time - for obvious reasons! We have decided to offer some Teams meeting sessions for all members to dial in, if you wish, and speak to a Branch Officer with any concerns, or anything you want to tell us. Three sessions were run in January, and we will review these to decide whether to run sessions on a regular basis.

UNISON Branch meetings are still taking place (online), and we will update you as we can regarding issues discussed there.

Of course we also have the (virtual) AGMs coming up on Thursday 4 March 2021, and there will be more info out about these nearer the time.

We're still here to support you, so don't hesitate to get in touch if you need this. Our online media is very active, we are on Facebook, Twitter, and have a website

<https://www.unisonhighlandhealthcare.co.uk/>

### Members' Safety Improved Down to New Steward

New Dunoon steward, Bobby Sheridan, had a recent victory in improving the health and safety of members in getting some essential safety lighting fixed. Bobby raised the concerns of nursing and domestic colleagues when, in the dark of winter, several lights failed in an area where staff are asked to park. Staff were having to make their way to their workplace at Cowal Community Hospital, and with the nursing and domestic shifts, this was often in the dark. Bobby had raised the issue with local estates staff, but was told budgets weren't available to fix the lights. Concerned that colleagues were in danger, Bobby raised the issue with other stewards in Argyll & Bute. Fellow stewards trained in Health & Safety (Patrick Harvey & Peter Laing) offered advice and insight. And with UNISON tenacity, the lights were fixed recently. Staff locally were satisfied that their concerns were taken up by UNISON. Thanks, Bobby, Pat and Peter for your work on behalf of our members!

**Britt Doughty-Godchaux, UNISON Argyll & Bute Convenor**

### NHS Annual Leave carry forward

Due to the current exceptional situation, management and trade unions, through the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC) have agreed that a larger carry forward of leave this year, from the end of March 2021, can be permitted. A letter has been issued accordingly.

Of course annual leave is very important, and the need to take a break from work is more important than ever, even if you can't necessarily go anywhere.

An extract from the letter (DL (2021) 03) states:

Any member of staff on Agenda for Change terms and conditions who has untaken annual leave as at 31 March 2021 may carry their untaken annual leave forward to the 2021-22 annual leave year. The normal 5 day carry forward rule will not apply for staff who have been unable to take their annual leave because of the COVID-19 emergency.

All Employers should aim for all their staff to have taken at least their statutory leave of 28 days (includes 20 days of annual leave and 8 public holidays) by 31 March 2021. Where this has not been possible due to either staff shortages and service demand, or other rea-

sons such as sick leave, the line manager should discuss and agree a plan with staff for what annual leave may still be able to be taken this year, and what will be carried forward into the 2021-22 annual leave year.

UNISON strongly believes that it's important for all our members to take their annual leave. However if this proves impossible for reasons related to the pandemic, you need to have a discussion with your manager along the lines above. There should not be a problem with this, but do contact us if you encounter any issues.



There for You Winter has a limited fund to offer grants of up to £200 to UNISON members struggling to pay fuel bills this winter.

Members whose income is less than £18,200 (if living alone) or £26,000 (for a family) can apply. Applications will also be accepted from members in receipt of either housing benefit, Universal Credit or council tax reduction.

You can download an application form to print and freepost back to us. Details are on the form. The website for the form and more information is here:

[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/financial-assistance/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/financial-assistance/)

### Up Front Covid £500 Bonus Payment

If you are not already aware, the £500 bonus payment will be made, in NHS Highland as in other NHS Boards, at the end of February. More specifically, the payment is a:

“one off pro-rata non-consolidated £500 payable to all directly employed NHS staff, as well as bank workers and locums paid through NHS Payrolls who have had at least one month’s continuous service in NHS Scotland between 17 March and 30 November 2020.”

The payment is pro-rata for part time staff, and is for all health and social care staff. We understand the payment will also be made to those who work in the private/voluntary sector, though at the time of writing, national discussions are taking place in terms of how this will be managed.

If the payment being made in a lump sum will impact on your benefits, you can opt for this to be spread over a longer period. A form to apply for this is available, and should be returned to Payroll (if you are an NHS Highland member of staff).

If you want to find out more, the letter from the Scottish Government and the form are available on our website, and you will find the letter and form near the top of this page: <https://www.unisonhighlandhealthcare.co.uk/covid-19-links-and-documents/>



### There for You COVID-19 Support

Are you suffering financially as a result of coronavirus?

Apply to our COVID-19 response fund for a grant to help you during this difficult time. We have received generous grants from UNISON and the CHSA (COVID-19 Healthcare Support Appeal) which enable us to support members who are struggling.

The COVID-19 response fund reopened on Monday 16 November 2020, offering grants of up to £500 to help members whose household incomes have been affected in certain ways by Covid.

Please note that applicants must be a UNISON member with savings of less than £2,500 and have paid at least two months’ subscriptions.

For more information and application form please visit: <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/financial-assistance/#heading-2>

### Covid Staff Vaccination Programme

Things are moving fast, and hopefully by the time you read this, you will have received (at least) your first dose of one of the three available vaccines!

At the time of writing, this programme is ramping up considerably.

Staff-wise, the target is to vaccinate around 25,000 staff in the NHS Highland (including Argyll and Bute) area. As well as NHS Highland employees, this covers groups such as social care, primary care, dentistry, testing centres, the list goes on!

(Continued from page 4)

Again at the time of writing, the target is for "front line" staff to have been vaccinated by 5 February. This then leaves (NHS Highland) priority groups 11-14 still to have their vaccination programmed, and these staff are:

11. Staff aged 18-65 in a clinical risk group as per the JCVI/Green Book definition.
12. Staff involved in business critical teams.
13. All other staff not captured in groups above and not able to work from home.
14. All other staff not captured in groups [groups 1-13] above.

We are pursuing this in terms of getting these groups vaccinated also, and will circulate more information on this as soon as we have it (which you might get before this article is published!).

Great progress has been made with vaccinating care home residents and staff, and the vaccination of other staff groups continues apace in all areas.

The main constraint is availability of vaccine.

It must be pointed out that, though highly recommended, vaccination remains voluntary, and an individual decision.

Finally, vaccination, of course, does not mean there should be any change in behaviour, yet, with regard to PPE use, social distancing, hand hygiene, and so on.

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|  <p><b>Thank you</b><br/>for being there<br/>when we all needed<br/>you most!</p> | <p><b>2021 UNISON Diaries</b></p> <p>The Branch would like to apologise for there being no diaries this year. Due to COVID and directive from the First Minister our local UNISON office has been closed and staff continue to work from home. Therefore, the Branch could not mail any diaries this year, but face masks and badges were sent to stewards to disseminate.</p> |
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**Membership**

You might be interested to know the Branch is growing, reversing a bit of a small slide in membership that we have experienced over the last wee while. So this is very good news - and welcome to all our new members who have joined recently! Incidentally, so we can still get in touch with you, please make sure your email address (and other details) are up to date. You can do this by emailing [inverness.office@unison.co.uk](mailto:inverness.office@unison.co.uk) or by telephoning 01463 715891 and leaving a message, or by post to UNISON, 53 Shore Street, Inverness, IV1 1NF.

**Thanks**

We would just like to say a heartfelt thank you for all that you are doing to keep patients and clients safe and well looked after, in these really difficult times. UNISON are there to support you and we would be delighted to hear from you about anything. Best wishes and keep safe!




What do you call an Irishman who bounces off the walls? Rick O'Shea

What does a baseball team and pancakes have in common? They both need a good batter!

A bicycle can't stand alone, it's two tyred

Why don't ants ever get sick? Because of their anty bodies

Now is not the right time to surround yourself with positive people

My wife said if I don't get off my computer and help with the dishes she'll slam my head on the keyboard but I think she's jokindssdhsgjhksrhvjhbdbfvd bldfb

What's the difference between apathy and ignorance? I don't know and I don't care

Why are pirates called pirates? Because they arrrgh!

How many times can you subtract 10 from 100? Once, because next time you try and do it, you will be subtracting 10 from 90

# COVID-19 has affected us all. Wellbeing support is available for you.

Health and social care staff have accessed resources on the National Wellbeing Hub at [www.promis.scot](http://www.promis.scot) nearly 80,000 times so far for:

-  Information on looking after yourself.
-  Free, evidence-based apps to help with personal resilience, stress, sleep etc.
-  Coaching, guides, webinars, and more.
-  Confidential emotional support via the National Wellbeing Helpline.

**0800 111 4191**

**[www.promis.scot](http://www.promis.scot)**

