

UP FRONT

Highland Healthcare Branch Newsletter

01463 715891

inverness.office@unison.co.uk

<http://www.unisonhighlandhealthcare.co.uk/> <https://www.facebook.com/unisonhighlandhealthcare/>



December 2021

COP 26 so far – UNISON and Green issues

UNISON have been leading the way with marches in Glasgow and other action and campaigning around COP 26 and the climate emergency.

Christina McAnea, UNISON's General Secretary, was in Glasgow. She had this to say about the youth climate march (5 November) and related matters:

"Climate change affects all of our communities, all of our families and all of our workplaces. That's why it's so important that all of us, as trade unionists, are taking action in cities across the UK."

We've heard a lot about how COP26 is the last chance to keep temperature rises below 1.5 degrees.

Whether these talks will succeed or not remains to be seen. But in being part of this protest we're sending a clear signal on behalf of the working people we represent across the UK that we demand world leaders to do the right thing and put the interests of the planet and future generations first.

And as trade unions we also have a message about how to cut carbon emissions," she continued.

"The Tories and the right believe that investors and free markets will create the solutions. But as we all know, it was unbridled capitalism that landed us in this mess in the first place. We need solutions underpinned by trade union values of solidarity, equality and internationalism."



Getting the UK's public services across the net zero line will require £140bn of government funding by 2035, according to this new research.

If the government's 2050 target is to be met, the UK's hospitals, schools, colleges, universities, care homes, town halls, leisure centres, police stations, courts, social housing, plus water, transport and environmental services all need to be part of the plan.

The report says that without government funding, public services still reeling from a decade of austerity, will struggle to decarbonise.

In the absence of a significant capital injection of funds, public services would only be able to move slowly towards net zero, taking resources from already stretched budgets, with disastrous consequences.

Challenges here are significant. But change can happen. It's more important than ever to be part of a strong union arguing for change, and supporting campaigns on this both in Glasgow and throughout the UK. If you are interested in getting involved in this, please contact the Branch Zero in Public (email i.office@unison.co.uk). You can also see Services: The more on UNISON Scotland's campaign and news Road to Decarbonisation".





Pensions Scotland

You will be aware that NHS pensions are changing for everyone, from 1 April 2022.

However there are some important messages around this date, and the information from this brief update is drawn from SPPA information.

Firstly:

From 1 April 2022, all those who continue in service will be eligible to do so as members of their respective reformed pension schemes (i.e. those introduced in 2015, of which many are already members), regardless of age. This includes members who were previously covered by “transitional protection”.

This means that any pension benefits after that point will be earned within the reformed pension schemes, but any benefits earned before within the legacy schemes up until that point will be protected.

On retirement (at any time following that date) those eligible will receive a choice (known as a “deferred choice underpin”).

This means that:

To address the discrimination identified by the courts, eligible members who were moved to the reformed pension scheme in 2015 (or later if they had tapered protection) will be moved back into their legacy pension scheme for the period during which the discrimination occurred, between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022.

When those members, or members who were originally protected, reach retirement, they will then receive a choice of which pension scheme benefits they would prefer to take for the period. This is called a “deferred choice”.

The choice will be between the members legacy pension scheme benefits and their reformed pension scheme benefits.

By deferring the choice until retirement, it allows individuals to make their choice of which pension scheme benefits are better for them, based on facts and known circumstances as opposed to assumptions on their future careers, health, retirement and other factors. The level of both pension scheme benefits will be known at retirement.

Importantly:

Schemes will provide information to members setting out their entitlement under both options, so members will have a clear understanding of the benefits available to them.

So the key messages are:

- Everyone in the NHS pension scheme will move to the 2015 scheme (if not already in this scheme) on 1 April 2022
- Benefits earned in any previous scheme will be protected at that point
- Benefits earned subsequently will be in the 2015 scheme
- Eligible members, on retirement, will be able to make a choice between receiving legacy scheme benefits between 1 April 2015 and 1 April 2022, or 2015 scheme benefits (information will be provided to pension members regarding the two options)

This brief article does not constitute individual pension advice. Members are strongly advised to check the SPPA information, and the UNISON Scotland webpages on pensions, to understand your own particular situation. As part of your membership you also have access to Lighthouse Financial Advice. You can call them on 08000 85 85 90 or email appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk to arrange a complimentary, no obligation appointment with one of their professional financial advisers.

Further information is here:

<https://unison-scotland.org/campaigns/pensions/>

<https://pensions.gov.scot/2015-remedy-faqs/nhs-scheme-faqs>

MENOPAUSE

With UNISON very much involved, NHS Highland has approved a new policy on supporting staff through the menopause. This is a significant issue for us, given most of the workforce are female, and that NHS Highland has an ageing workforce. The adoption of this policy (by no means all Health Boards have one) is very good news. If you are a member facing issues around this and need support, please do not hesitate to contact the Branch (email i.office@unison.co.uk). There is also a great resource about the menopause which has been developed locally and is on the Highland Sexual Health website. Finally there is also online learning around this available at Turas Learn (you will need to log into your own account to access this).

Policy:

<http://intranet.nhsh.scot.nhs.uk/PoliciesLibrary/Documents/Menopause%20Policy.pdf#search=menopause%20policy>

<https://www.highlandsexualhealth.co.uk/menopause>

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/>



"Where is this?"

Just for a bit of fun, this picture is from a location in NHS Highland. If you know where it is, please email adam.palmer3@nhs.scot with your answer, using the subject heading, Where is this.

Correct answers will go into a hat and the first 3 drawn out will receive a small parcel of UNISON goodies! So, where is this...?

Vacancy-Branch Minute Secretary

We are looking for a volunteer to take the Branch Committee and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) minutes. You don't necessarily need to be a trained minute taker - in the absence of someone in this role we have all had a go at doing the minutes!

We need someone to come along to the meeting (virtually at the moment), take the minutes and produce it reasonably quickly. At present the meetings are held on a weekday evening. You can also contribute to discussions if you want!

You will get a small honorarium payment for doing this. You will also get to hear about and be involved in the work of the Branch at first hand.

If you are interested please contact Dawn MacDonald, Branch Secretary (dawn.macdonald3@nhs.scot).

We'd love to hear from you!

Have you ever thought about becoming a Union Learning Rep (ULR) in your workplace?

The Role of a ULR



A Learning Rep is someone who talks to colleagues about training and education, who knows and promotes UNISON courses, who knows where to direct people who need information about further education or how to access funding for learning. Union Learning Reps often engage learners that are otherwise hard for the union to reach. This is one of the key contributions of trade unions to the learning and skills agenda.

Under the Employment Act 2002 Union Learning Reps in recognised workplaces are entitled to reasonable paid time off for training and for carrying out their duties.

If you wish to find out more, please contact Marta Chaba, UNISON Regional Learning and Development Organiser, in the Highlands & Islands at m.chaba@unison.co.uk



Introducing Argyll & Bute UNISON members' only Facebook group!

An exciting development for Argyll & Bute members is that UNISON is piloting a *closed* Facebook group just for members. This group will mean we can discuss issues affecting us as well as sharing resources and support. We all make this group what it is and what it can be. We hope it will be a helpful, fun, community-minded way for members across Argyll & Bute to connect. (Also, this is a pilot so we can consider a members' community for all of NHS Highland later!)

If you are a member in Argyll & Bute, sign up and see.

***Please note, in order to ensure that only members can access this group, you will need to apply with:

- Your name (as registered with UNISON)
- Your membership number (which is included in every email you receive from UNISON)
- Agreement to the page rules.

If you do not include the above, we will have to decline you from the group. If you do not have an email with your member number, please ensure your details are updated with the UNISON office (email: i.office@unison.co.uk)***

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/512779209899481/>

We hope to see you there!

Britt Doughty-Godchaux, Argyll & Bute Convener, UNISON

Retirement Matters

My first news is that after more than a decade as Branch Retired Members Co-ordinator, I have decided that the time has come for me to step aside and I will be standing down with effect from the March 2022 Annual General Meeting. I have enjoyed my time in this post and greatly appreciate the support provided by the Branch and UNISON staff based at the Highland Area Resource Centre. I would encourage any retired member (or who will be retired by March 2022) interested in taking on the Retired Members Co-ordinator role, to get in touch with the Branch (i.office@unison.co.uk), and/or contact me if you require further information (chrisb.smith@btinternet.com).

UNISON National Retired Members' Conference 2021

This year's conference was a virtual event held on 12-13 October. The on-line format was moderately successful although I found that the absence of the usual topic workshops was a significant disadvantage. The number of conference delegates was less than half the usual attendance at conferences, which may partly reflect limited access to technology. The UNISON Vice-presidents Andrea Egan and Kath Owen capably chaired alternate sessions, in what was only their second virtual conference. The agenda comprised a wide range of motions relating to pensions, health and social care, benefits etc. Details of motions and decisions reached are available on the UNISON website.

The 2022 National Retired Members' Conference is scheduled to be held at Telford International Centre in Shropshire. This is close to 'Iron Bridge Gorge', a major attraction for those interested in the beginnings of the industrial revolution - and arguably the origins of climate change?

Pensions

The Government has announced that the State Pension (SP) increase from April 2022 will be 3.1%, in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This means that the 'triple lock' (increasing SP by the highest of CPI inflation for September, average earnings growth as of July, or 2.5%) has been reduced to a double lock for 2022/2023. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been unable to produce a meaningful estimate of average earnings growth due to the distorting effect of furlough payments etc, during the Covid crisis. Certainly, earnings increases being widely quoted in the media are significantly higher than our working colleagues in the NHS have been awarded! There are grounds for optimism that the link to average earnings will be restored in future, although it is worth noting that average earnings has been the determining factor in pension increases on only one occasion since the triple lock was introduced in 2011.

Public sector pensions such as the NHS scheme will also increase by 3.1%, in line with CPI as usual.

Chris Smith – Retired Members Co-ordinator



To the thief who stole my glasses - I will find you, I have contacts....

I wanted to be a monk but I never got the chants.

Q What did the pirate say when he turned 80?

A Aye matey

Q What do you call a magical dog?

A Labracadabrador

Sting launches new aromatherapy range. His marketing agency says today "It's a massage in a bottle"



UNISON Member Learning courses in January/February 2022

I invite you to participate in any of the courses listed below. All courses are fully funded and will be delivered online (various platforms). If you wish to book a place, or would like further information, please email Marta Chaba, UNISON Regional Learning and Development Organiser, m.chaba@unison.co.uk

Course dates and times	Course title/short description
12 <u>and</u> 13 January 2022 9.30 am – 1.00 pm (both days)	Excel for Beginners In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of Excel. The more advanced you become, the less time you'll need to update spreadsheets manually.
19 January 2022 9.30 am – 12 noon	Suicide Prevention Get Your Questions Answered! Are there any signs that someone is contemplating suicide? If you think someone is contemplating suicide, what can you do about it? If you have been affected by someone's suicide, what can you do to help yourself? What are the best ways to lead a life that feels like it is genuinely worth living? What professional help is available to those contemplating suicide?
26 <u>and</u> 27 January 2022 9.30 am – 1.00 pm (both days)	Become a Master of Microsoft Word Perhaps you think you can use Microsoft Word... but, you've just scratched the surface. No need to worry, after participating in this course you'll have the skills to maximize the capabilities of the program. Word is packed with a multitude of features that can help make the creation of documents, reports, and text files easier.
1 February 2022 9.30 am - 12.30 pm	Mindfulness at Work The course will introduce a Mindful approach to working life. It will cover reduction in worry and anxiety, more 'space' to focus thinking and to select the correct response, and even a more balanced attitude to stressful situations.
9 February 2022 9.30 am - 3.30 pm	Personality Disorder Awareness The course will look at different personality disorders to show how individuals can differ significantly, in terms of how they think, perceive, feel, and relate to others. And how unusual, odd, or aggressive behaviour may be underpinned by a personality disorder, which might well be improved by the right responses.