

## Problems Continue for Voluntary Sector

Voluntary Sector organisations in Aberdeenshire have been forced into terminating contracts with the local authority because of funding problems.

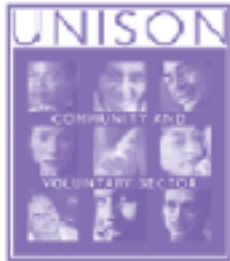
In November Ark Housing terminated a contract with the council to provide support to 54 people with complex needs. The service was costing the charity in the region of £500,000 more to deliver than the council was able to pay. Inspire (formerly Partnership), who provide support services for adults and children with learning disabilities throughout the north-east, also terminated a number of smaller contracts with Aberdeenshire on the same grounds. Cornerstone, another voluntary sector provider with services in Aberdeenshire, is also believed to be reviewing contracts with councils because of spiralling deficits.

In a recent article in the Glasgow Herald, Annie Gunner of Community Care Providers Scotland (CCPS), which speaks for the sector, said: "Two or three other very large national providers are also in the position of potentially withdrawing from the market. People are very worried and bluffs are being called. You end up in the position where organisations are having to subsidise or prop up public services using their own resources."

UNISON, Scotland's biggest union for Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) workers, says that the Scottish Executive's vision of the CVS providing more services must include reforming conditions of employment in the sector which it says are Dickensian. Focusing on overtime payments and sleep over working, UNISON Regional Organiser Matt McLaughlin said: "Scotland's social care employers receive millions of pounds from the Scottish Executive and local councils to enable them to provide support and assistance for people with disabilities living in their own community. UNISON members will have 'slept over' in someone else's home on Christmas Eve for as little as £25.00 for the entire night. Plus some UNISON members will have worked Christmas Day for as little as £6.10 per hour for a 12 hour shift. Some of them will have been away from their families for as much as 28 hours."

Matt added: "Recently the Scottish Executive launched a five year vision for change, designed to give the Community and Voluntary Sector a greater role in the provision of public services. Whilst UNISON welcomes that commitment, the Executive, local councils and employers in the sector really need to stop talking about making change and get on with it. Eradicating terms and conditions that Scrooge would be proud of should be an important first step."

For more info go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com/voluntarysector/volsecupdate1.htm](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/voluntarysector/volsecupdate1.htm)



## Inspire staff fall behind

Inspire have awarded staff a 1.5% increase in pay from November 1<sup>st</sup>. There were concerns that Inspire would be unable to fund any pay award at all for 2006/7 due to increased difficulties in local government funding. However, Bob Revie, Aberdeenshire Branch secretary, met with the board of Inspire to put forward UNISON's case for an increase, following which the board agreed to "a modest pay increase". Chief Executive Catriona McPhee-Smith wrote to staff in November stating that this increase would not have been possible without the help of staff in keeping costs down where possible. Inspire were also forced into reviewing a number of posts in training, SVQ and support services, and regrettably, a small number of posts were lost. While UNISON's view is that any increase is better than none, once again Inspire staff find themselves falling further behind local government colleagues, who agreed a 2.5% pay award for both 2006/7 and 2007/8.

The winner of the Wordsearch in the Summer 2006 issue of UNISON Matters was Alexander Taylor of Fraserburgh.

Mr Taylor receives a £25.00 cheque. Sorry there is no competition in this issue. We ran out of space!

The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the UNISON Aberdeenshire Branch



## Not today thanks!

Advice from Les Chalmers about how to deal with nuisance calls and mail

### TELEMARKETING

A phone call to my mother the other day wasn't answered. Nothing strange in that, BUT SHE WASN'T OUT AND SHE WAS SITTING RIGHT NEXT TO THE PHONE. She, like many others, had just had enough of the barrage of marketing telephone calls, from telling her she had won competitions that had never been entered, to asking her about her "consumer lifestyle". For her, the feeling of pleasurable anticipation when the phone rings, had gone.

At first the telephone was her lifeline. These little calls from friends and family helped her get through the days. Then these awful calls came in and she was afraid to answer the phone.

I told her to register not to receive these calls.

**TPS REGISTRATION LINE 0845 070 0707 or [www.tpsonline.org.uk](http://www.tpsonline.org.uk)**

It takes up to 28 days to become effective. If after this time you are still having problems, you can speak directly to an advisor.

### SILENT PHONE CALLS

Silent Calls, when the phone rings and then goes dead when answered, are both annoying and worrying. These calls are made by automatic diallers to keep sales staff busy with more potential calls than they can handle. If they are a problem:

**SILENT CALLGUARD SERVICE 0870 444 3969**

**TOP TIPS: Don't get chatting to salespersons. Never believe salespersons. Don't buy over the phone Time is on your hands so think before making a commitment Ask for more information.**

### JUNK MAIL

To get rid of junk mail register with **MPS REGISTRATION LINE 0845 703 4599 or [www.mpsonline.org.uk](http://www.mpsonline.org.uk)**

## Join us today!

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# Matters

## The Newsletter for UNISON Members in Aberdeenshire

Editor: Kate Ramsden - Winter 2006

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.....



## Single Status Have your say!



Negotiations with the council on single status are all but completed and as this goes to print it is likely that the branch will be preparing to ballot members on whether you want to accept the scheme.

"The proposals have been assessed and deemed to be equal pay proof," said Bob Revie, lead negotiator. "The council has also promised to have the scheme independently assessed again, once the service reviews are finished. We are also pleased to have negotiated a robust appeals process, as we know that many of our members are not happy with where they have been put in the job families."

"However, we are less happy with the terms and conditions package and worry that it will leave many low paid staff worse off. We are still waiting for final advice from UNISON HQ but it is looking as if we will be giving members all the pros and cons and leaving it to them to make their final decision about how they want to vote"

All being well ballot papers will be sent out in the first week of the New Year. You are urged to have your say.

## Branch wins campaign award

The branch has won this year's Scottish Communications and Campaigns award for the best campaign, for our campaign around Equal Pay compensation for our low paid mainly women members who were not paid bonus.

Bob Revie, Branch Secretary, collected a framed certificate and £250 on behalf of the branch, from UNISON's national president, Malcolm Cantello, at December's Scottish Council.

"I am delighted that the branch has won this award," said Bob. "It is a tribute not only to the branch officers and full-time staff who planned the campaign, but to all the branch activists who got involved. We couldn't have done it without their support."

and to give advice to members who were made compensation offers for pay inequality. To do this, the branch sent out briefings, attended all of the council's signing days to provide advice and support, trained activists on the equal pay issues, and briefed the local press.

*Judges comments on the branch campaign "Well thought out and properly planned." "Briefings were refreshingly in plain English." "This was a good example of the nuts and bolts organisation, planning, objectives and communication that is essential to effective union activity."*

As a result, the branch has lodged grievances on behalf of over 150 of our members to protect their rights to compensation. Many of those members have recently received improved offers. We have gained 6 new workplace contacts and our membership has increased by 10%. We have also met many more of our members and you had the chance to talk to branch officers and stewards.



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## Branch motion pays dividends as asylum guide launched

This branch's motion to Scottish Council in February highlighting the plight of asylum seeker families and calling for an end to dawn raids has resulted in a number of initiatives by UNISON Scotland, most recently the launch of a guide for social work staff working with the children of asylum seekers.



The Guide, "Child's welfare paramount?" was drawn up jointly by UNISON and BASW (the British Association of Social Workers) and was co-authored by Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair, along with John Stevenson, UNISON and Ruth Stark, BASW. The booklet advises on the duties and responsibilities that social work staff have in dealing with the children of asylum-seekers and the support they can get. It was launched at the Scottish Social Services Council Conference in October.

### Ethical practice

"We have been very concerned that immigration law compromises children's rights under Scottish law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We hope this guide will support our members in ensuring wherever they can, that the welfare of the child is paramount. This is a guide for ethical practice and we will not be part of giving a humane face to inhumane practices like 'dawn raids'," said Kate.

UNISON Scotland has been in discussion with the Scottish Executive about the concerns raised in the branch's motion about the impact on the children of asylum seekers of the practices of the Immigration Service.

A commitment was made by the UK Immigration Minister back in March to ensure that asylum seekers' children would be assessed and each would have a lead professional appointed, plus immigration staff dealing with children would have to have enhanced disclosure checks.

### Amnesty call

These commitments have not yet been implemented, but pressure is being exerted by UNISON following a spate of recent 'dawn raids' by immigration officials outwith the agreed protocol. UNISON Scotland is pressing for an amnesty for asylum families who have lived here for more than a year and an end to dawn raids.

The branch is sending out the asylum guides to all our members in Social Work in the New Year. If anyone else would like a copy please contact the UNISON Resource Centre (contact details on page 4)

For further information go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com/news/asylumguide.htm](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/news/asylumguide.htm)



## New look pension scheme for Scotland

Trade unions in Scotland look set to negotiate a better pensions package for members than in England and Wales.

Whilst the Rule of 85 is to be removed from the Local Government Pension Scheme, transitional arrangements negotiated in Scotland will provide protection up until 2020, compared with only 2016 south of the border.

And in Scotland, all the savings to be made from scrapping the Rule of 85 will be ploughed back into a new look pension scheme, whereas in England and Wales only half the savings will be retained.

### Timetable

The Scottish Parliament has agreed a timetable for negotiating the changes to the Local government Pension scheme which is longer than the timetable in England and Wales, and has promised full consultation with the unions and a ballot of members before the final scheme is put in place. Talks will continue between January and April 2007 on the proposed changes, with consultation planned for May and a ballot in June.

### Judicial review lost

UNISON members will no doubt be disappointed that the magnificent day of action held in March did not save the Rule of 85. However, UNISON lost the Judicial Review in England and Wales heard in September and has had to accept that the Rule of 85 must go. The focus now is on negotiating the best possible new look pensions scheme in Scotland. Negotiators are confident that they are on course to do just that.

"Removing the Rule of 85 will also release financial savings from the local government pension scheme. We are determined to ensure that every saving made from its removal will be put back into the LPGS. This will help ensure that the new scheme is fair, healthy and delivers for all its members," said Tom McCabe, Minister for Finance and Public Services Reform.

A Pensions Seminar will be held in February 2007 to update branches. For further info go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com)

## Branch to meet teaching support staff members

As the branch prepares to submit tribunal claims on behalf of over 50 of our classroom assistant members, branch officers have arranged a series of meetings with teaching support staff around Aberdeenshire to let them know about key issues which are affecting them and to hear their views.

The meetings are also open to teaching support staff who are not members of UNISON but who may wish to join.

Inez Teece, who is the lead officer for teaching support staff members said, "A great deal is going on just now for our members who provide teaching support in schools. We have submitted grievances on behalf of our classroom assistants but the council has not yet given any hearing dates. We feel the next option is to go to Employment Tribunal to address the situation of pay inequality over the years. We are also awaiting the latest proposals on the proposed new post of learning assistant, and we want to let members know about the research by the EOC which shows that classroom assistants and SFL auxiliaries are underpaid and under valued." (see below)



## Classroom Assistants research points to unfair pay

by Chris Bartter, Scottish Communications Officer

An Equal Opportunities Commission formal investigation into the role and status of Classroom Assistants in Scottish primary schools – called *Valuable Assets* – has shown they were working at high levels of responsibility but at the bottom end of pay.

The staff are mostly part-time. This meant that their pay was at the lowest of local government pay scales and indeed is little more than the statutory minimum wage.

Carol Judge, UNISON's Scottish Organiser (Local Government) said, "UNISON is pleased to be working with the EOC to carry forward this important research.

"We are aware that Classroom Assistants do a wide range of jobs, jobs that can contribute significantly to the learning and teaching of children. We have said for some time that they are undervalued for what they do and will be looking forward to the forthcoming investigation into the higher level roles and the impact of the part-time gender pay gap."

The research has found that Classroom Assistants are 99% women who mostly work (and are paid for) term time only. They typically are aged 31-50. However their salary is paid over the whole year resulting in an hourly rate of between £5.05 and £8.93. The current minimum wage is £5.05 per hour for workers aged 22 and over.

This is phase one of the research. Phase 2 is due to be published next April.

For more information go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com/news/teachingsupport1.htm](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/news/teachingsupport1.htm)

## ABERDEENSHIRE BRANCH AGM

to be held on  
Wed 21st February 2007  
at 7.15pm  
at the Kintore Arms,  
Inverurie  
Buffet at 6.30pm  
ALL WELCOME

## Promoting Equality

The Gender Equality Duty is the biggest change in sex equality legislation in 30 years and will mean that public authorities must actively promote equality between men and women and get rid of sex discrimination. It is part of the new Equality Act and comes into force in April 2007.



### So what will our employers have to do?

Public sector employers and service providers (including voluntary organisations) will need to radically rethink what they do and how services are delivered.

The core of the gender duty is "the general duty" on public sector employers to get rid of discrimination and harassment and to make sure that men and women have equal opportunity. The second aspect outlines "specific duties" setting out the steps public authorities must take to deliver on this responsibility.

### They must:

- publish an action plan setting out how they will do this. This will need to be monitored, and must be reviewed every 3 years.
- develop an equal pay policy and review it regularly to make sure it is working.
- conduct gender impact assessments of all law and policy developments to make sure that they affect men and women equally.
- consult employees, service users and other key people in doing all this.

All public authorities, including Aberdeenshire Council, will have to have all this completed by the time the Gender Equality Duty becomes law on 7th April 2007.

For more information go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com/news/genderequality.htm](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/news/genderequality.htm)