

MEET THE ACTIVISTS



Karen Fraser

Position in UNISON:

Steward for the Library and newsletter editor

Job Title:

Customer Service Librarian at Shetland Library

Reason for Becoming Active:

Because nobody else would do it, and because you need to take responsibility and be a part of things rather than just whining pointlessly about what 'they' do to us.

Post Involves:

As steward at the library I just try to keep members informed, entice folk into joining and go to committee meetings. As newsletter editor I put together this very publication, which involves bullying people into writing pieces and nagging about deadlines, then wrestling with Publisher. Couldn't bully anyone into doing this feature though which is why I'm featuring in it myself.

Hopes for Future:

A better Single Status deal as what's on offer so far is going to be a nightmare for both workers and management.

Hobbies and Interests:

Walking, books, food and drink, hanging around staring into space, talking to the cat, bit of gardening, theatre, pottery. I organize the Lerwick Book Group and it's been a lot more work (but enjoyably so) than I ever imagined. I'm on the Lerwick Community Council where I do no good whatsoever but occasionally get the pleasure of annoying people.

Who's Who and where- Local Officers and Stewards

Chair	Brian Smith	01595 744354
Vice Chair	John Leach	01595 744858
Branch Development Officer / Secretary / Co-ordinator	Tracey Leith	01595 692973
	Kaila Tarrant	01595 692019
Branch Meetings Secretary	Val Turner	01595 694688
Equalities Officer	Amanda Pearson	01595 696698
Health & Safety Officer	Jim Grant	01595 744871
Membership Records Officer	Michelle Goudie	01595 744859
Membership Services Secretary	Barry Edwards	01595 744202
Newsletter Editor	Karen Fraser	01595 743868
Retired Members Officer	Donald Silk	01595 692451
Stewards Co-ordinators	Elaina Leach	01595 744816
	Graham Stiles	01806 522722
Treasurer	Stefanie Pottinger	01595 744994
Union Learning Rep.	Mary Anderson	01595 744992
Welfare Officer	Karen Irwin	01595 744095
Young Members Officer	Daniel Robertson	01595 744995

DEPARTMENTAL STEWARDS

Assessors Office	Kaila Tarrant	01595 692019
Charitable Trust	Daniel Robertson	01595 744995
Drugs & Alcohol Services	Amanda Pearson	01595 696698
Economic Development	Marvin Smith	01595 744921
Education Services	Tracey Leith	01595 692973
	Susan Jamieson	01595 809217
Environmental Services	John Leach	01595 744858
Housing	Ewan Balfour	01595 744336
ICT	Heather Jones	01595 744701
Legal Services (Market Street)	Karen Irwin	01595 744095
Library	Karen Fraser	01595 743868
Organisational Development	Peter Peterson	01595 74 4538
Planning	Gwenan Hughes	01595 744834
Ports and Harbours	Barry Edwards	01595 744202
Social Work (St Olaf Street)	Fiona Morton	01595 744442
	Shirley Mackay	01595 744450
Social Work (Viewforth)	Heather Butler	01595 692760
Social Work (ILP)	June Henry	01595 859255
Shetland Amenity Trust	Mick Clifton	01595 694688
Wastview Care Centre	Margaret Forrest	01595 809483

WORKPLACE CONTACTS

Finance	Andrew Hall	01595 744649
Social Work (St Olaf Street)	Francis Prittie	01595 744447
	Eleanor Robertson	01595 744495

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the UNISON branch or the editor

The Newsletter of
Unison Shetland
 Local
 Government
 Branch
 October 2006



Yarns

Riding the Social Care Roller-coaster

By Graham Stiles, Steward Coordinator

As everyone is aware, our elected members have decided that, in light of the present financial climate the S.I.C. will have to make a 5% cut in their budgets. On 19th Sept the council decided how these cuts would be made within Community Care. After considering the options, they made the controversial decision to charge for care delivery, using the revenue raised to minimise actual cuts in service delivery.

On the face of it, this would seem to be the best possible outcome for those of us employed in Social Care delivery. Without significant cuts in service delivery, life will go on largely as before. Or will it?

To date, revenue from day services, laundry and meals on wheels has been collected as cash by the staff delivering the service. But now, with the addition of personal care for those between 16-65, and all domestic elements of the home help service attracting a charge, all revenue will be collected by means of a monthly bill. While this is a neat solution, with staff no longer having to handle service users cash, it will require additional administration resources.

There is also a high probability that charges will also result in a reduction of service provision. Meals on Wheels will cost almost double at £4.00, and domestic tasks that were free will now cost £4.00 per hour (to a maximum of £20.00 per week). The charge for day services (daycare) will also increase, from £2.20 to £6.00 per session., and laundry services will be charged at £4.00 per bag. Personal care for the over 65's remains free of charge, but for those between 16- 65 a £7.00 per hour charge will be levied.

It's clear there is likely to be a considerable impact resulting from these charges. The majority of workers in this sector work on an hourly basis and have no contract. If the service users 'vote with their feet' and reduce or withdraw their use of services, then the workload will reduce accordingly.

The council has found itself between a rock and a hard place. With social care being the S.I.C's largest service deliverer, it is inevitable that this is where the 5% cuts will have most impact. By charging, their hope is that effect on actual service delivery will be minimal. Of course, if service users continue to accept services, (and therefore contribute to the savings by increasing revenue) then this will be the case. But we have to accept that there will probably be some negative effects,

and felt by both service users and staff. At this time however, it is impossible to predict how large this effect will be.

UNISON has already met with management to discuss the possible impact the introduction of charges is likely to have on our members. UNISON will continue to work in partnership with the management team to ensure our members are supported during this change.

Management are currently looking at how they can best engage with those staff who are likely to be effected by the implementation of charges for social care services. Charges will be implemented in January, UNISON urge their members to take every opportunity to become involved in this process. It's in everyone's interest to do so.

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It's your union: make it work

Susan Jamieson, Education steward, talks about her experience of training to be a steward.



I became a steward in May this year, and recently went to Glasgow for the training course. My workplace very kindly allowed me time off to attend as they support everyone having access to a trade union and realise the benefits of union membership. The course was attended by myself and twelve other people from various Scottish areas. There were people from all kinds of workplace—health, education, leisure and recreation and social work. It was very interesting meeting these people to share experiences and discuss problems they were having to deal with on their members' behalf.

I found the course very helpful and it enabled me to feel more comfortable about speaking out to groups of people. I felt by the end that I had a much better idea of what exactly the responsibilities of a steward are, and how I could help my workplace members with some issues I was already aware of.

The course covered grievance and disciplinary procedures and we were asked to bring along copies of our own policies on this, which was very interesting. We also did a lot on interviewing skills, so it was a good experience and I made a lot of helpful contacts who have kept in touch since I got home, which is nice. It's good to hear how they are dealing with issues the same as we have here such as Single Status and pensions.

It was also good to realise the benefits of being in UNISON that we tend not to be aware of, such as discounts for eye-care and glasses for you and your family from Vision Express, personal accident advice on work and non-work related accidents, and discounts on

insurance, travel, holidays and a low-interest credit card.

I think becoming a UNISON steward is a very worthwhile commitment as there are so many issues surrounding our work all the time—but perhaps more so at the moment with all the changes that might be coming with Single Status. Workers need to know where to get advice and updates, and since I started I realise there's a shortage of stewards in a lot of areas, which makes it difficult to know when members are having problems.

We could really benefit from a steward in every workplace, or if you feel you can't commit to that duty, even workplace contacts are very helpful to quickly pass on important information and to let the stewards know of any problems and issues members may have.

Our local government branch meets usually once a month at the St Sunniva Street office (though we are soon to move to new premises). The committee are a very good team who work hard to deal with members' problems and queries, or arrange events such as the forthcoming Christmas party. If you would like information about becoming a steward or a workplace contact, feel free to give me or any other UNISON official a ring: contact numbers are on the back of this newsletter.

You too can
have a credit
card like
Brian's!



Credit cards, insurance,
loans, financial planning,
discounts...have a look at
the range of member
benefits on

www.unison.org.uk
or call UNISONdirect on
0845 355 0845

Email:
direct@unison.co.uk



Return to Learn

The next R2L
course should be
up and running by
early November:
see last issue for
more details or
contact
Mary Anderson,
Learning Rep.

New-Look Local Government Pension Scheme for Scotland

October 2006

The second meeting of the tri-partite Scottish Local Government Pension Advisory Group (SLOGPAG) was held on 28 September 2006. This body includes representatives from the trade unions, CoSLA and the Scottish Executive and is tasked with developing a New-Look LGPS for Scotland.

New Scheme Timetable

The key issues for discussion from the last meeting were the scope for developing a new Scottish scheme and the timescale in which to deliver it. The trade unions and CoSLA had made representations to Scottish Ministers that the proposed timetable, which broadly mirrored the English arrangements, would leave only a couple of months to develop a new Scottish scheme.

At the SLOGPAG meeting the Scottish Executive representatives indicated that the minister was responding positively to these representations.

In particular he recognised the scope for developing a distinctive Scottish scheme and that this required a longer period to develop.

This involves a development period up to June/July 2007 followed by the formal consultation and parliamentary stages and then a period to prepare systems etc. In practical terms this probably means implementation in early 2009. This breaks any remaining links with the English scheme timetable.

The trade unions and CoSLA welcomed this response and we have agreed to meet on 1 November to draft a revised timetable for consideration at the next SLOGPAG meeting.

Key Issues for the New-Look LGPS

CoSLA tabled a revised list of key issues that reflected our separate discussions. In addition we have added a review of pension fund governance and indicated that



there may be a number of other amendments to the scheme that reflect our consultation with members. Any new scheme would also have to include an equality impact assessment.

CoSLA have retained actuaries who will work up detailed costing of a final salary scheme at different accrual rates using actual Scottish fund figures. This is the essential starting point for discussing a new scheme and will give us a clearer indication of the costs involved. This should be available for our next meeting.

Other LGPS Issues

The regulations implementing the tax changes have been tabled in the Scottish Parliament for implementation on 6 October. The regulations abolishing the Rule of 85 and the more favourable Scottish transitional arrangements will be circulated shortly with an implementation date of 1 December 2006. The minister is still considering his approach to the proposed Discretionary Compensation Regulations. This has been the subject of consultation in England but nothing has been proposed in Scotland. There will have to be a separate Scottish consultation and we will prepare a full briefing when the minister decides how to take this issue forward.

Next Steps

The very welcome agreement on scope and timescales means we now have time to develop the Scottish LGPS.

It is hoped a branch delegate will be able to attend a **LGPS seminar on Wednesday 22 November 2006** in Glasgow. Any member interested in the pensions debate please contact a member of the branch about how to get involved.

New Branch Premises

At a Branch AGM six years ago a motion was put forward to look for new offices for the branch. Our current office has served us well



but with a larger number of representatives meeting space is becoming limited and the lack of a disabled entrance has always been a concern of the branch.

Therefore we are delighted that we have secured premises in the Alexandra Buildings which we hope to be moving into shortly. A further newsletter with details of the opening of the new office will be circulated to members soon.



The current offices in St Sunniva Street: nice view of the park, but poor disabled access.



BLOG



Young Members' Officer Daniel Robertson has started a blog, to keep members informed of what is happening in the world of trade unions and of course UNISON.

"Blogging was voted the best way to keep young people informed" says Daniel "so I thought I would try it out". You can have a look at:

<http://danielunison.blogspot.com>

Daniel has also become the workplace steward for the Charitable Trust. Every workplace needs a steward or workplace contact - if you don't have one talk to colleagues and elect someone to represent you.

Valuable assets - a formal investigation into the role and status of classroom assistants



Tracey Leith (left) and Susan Jamieson recently attended a meeting in Edinburgh about Classroom Assistants.

Valuable assets is a ground breaking formal investigation into the role and status of classroom assistants being led by the Equal Opportunities Commission. This groundbreaking investigation offers a unique opportunity to examine the low pay and low status of work in a specific sector and build greater understanding of the effect of the dominated occupations associated with caring and domestic skills.

Preliminary research has identified that classroom assistant jobs in Scotland are popular with many women who are looking for family friendly hours and holidays that fit with their childcare needs. However, many will be shocked by the low levels of pay, some just reaching the minimum wage at £5.05, considering the wide range of tasks involved.

We urge people to contribute to the investigation by sharing their experiences with either Susan or myself or directly to the EOC at the following link:

<http://www.eoc.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=18802>

Equal Pay Claims

Negotiations are still ongoing with regard to equal pay. If you have still not submitted a claim and wish to please contact Tracey Leith as soon as possible. If you have submitted a claim form these are still being processed and you should be hearing from the branch in the very near future.

Women's Conference

The 2006 Scottish Women's Conference took place on Saturday 7th October 2006 in the Glasgow Branch Office, 18 Albion Street, Glasgow. Branch Development Officer Kaila Tarrant (right) attended: here is her report.



promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination - instead of depending on individuals making complaints about sex discrimination, the duty places the legal responsibility on the public authorities to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly. The duty will affect policy making, public services, such as transport, and employment practices such as recruitment & flexible working.

Next on the agenda were three workshops:

- Representing Equality Issues
- Self Organization- Getting it right
- Preparing for the New Gender Equality Duty

This was followed by a presentation from Eileen Dinning, Scottish Equalities Officer on New Equality Legislation & the Role for UNISON women. There was information about new Duties, regulations and proposals.

The Gender Equality Duty [GED] comes into force in April 2007 and it requires public authorities to

The Conference was well attended.

UNISON CHRISTMAS PARTY

CLICKIMIN CENTRE

9th DECEMBER 2006
2.15 pm to 4.30 pm

It's that time of year again! To book your child a place at the party this year, please forward their name, age and gender and your membership number to either

Tracey Leith:

tracey.leith@shetland.gov.uk,
phone 01595 692973

or

Elaina Leach:

elaina.leach@shetland.gov.uk,
phone 01595 744816

before

17 November 2006

Remember due to the popularity of the party, spaces are limited to members' children. Unfortunately there is no room to extend this to members' siblings, nieces, nephews, cousins or grandchildren.



Single status: two steps back

by Brian Smith, branch chair

Since our last issue, there have been a few developments in the single status process. Unfortunately, they have not been steps forward.

You will recall that Unison asked the Council to provide evidence that their 'final offer' was 'equality proofed' – that is, that it could not be challenged by anyone on the grounds that it discriminated against this or that party or group of workers. Unions and local authorities have to be very careful about equality, since institutions and individuals might find themselves in legal trouble if they recommend an unequal package to members or individuals.

The Council asked a management consultant to do the job. She reported back that the proposed offer – the Council's preferred pay model, and their proposals about preservation - *wasn't* equality proof. So it was back to the drawing board.

Problem

There is one major problem about the Council's approach. They are desperate to avoid making any addition to the annual pay bill. This attitude has bedevilled Shetland's single status project from the outset.

As I write, I have been looking at the news about Glasgow's single status offer to staff. I don't know the background to it, but it shows exactly what is wrong with the Shetland 'offer'. Glasgow is adding 6.4 per cent to their pay bill. Aberdeenshire has just offered to add nine per cent. Shetland is offering less than half a per cent!

Glasgow is saying that 84% of staff will see a rise in their annual salary, with 58% gaining more than £500 per year. 'We have also made it clear', a Council spokesperson says, 'that there will be no wage freeze and no job losses to pay for this deal.'

From what Unison has seen of the Shetland pay model so far, the situation here is completely different. Shetland Islands Council is proposing that there should be very large numbers of 'losers' indeed. Shetland's proposals about preservation – a one-off payment – won't alter that situation much.

There hasn't been a ballot yet about the Glasgow offer. But in Moray, where the Council has been forced by pressure from the unions to put money into single status – about six per cent – 80 per cent of Unison members have voted to accept.

Ballot

The ballot is the central part of the exercise. That is when members will get the opportunity to say what they think of all the Council's offer: the pay model and the terms and conditions, and what they mean for them personally. *If there is a bad offer, members will vote accordingly.*

At a branch meeting in Shetland recently, a steward said: 'I thought single status was meant to be a partnership'. It is. But if I may speak personally here, that isn't the impression that I have had, in Shetland, during the past two years. Negotiating single status has been a dreadfully confrontational process.

Just as union activists routinely get training, so should managers – especially those charged with the big responsibility of dealing with their employees' terms and conditions!

There is still time for management to wake up. Faced with the bad equality impact assessment, they need to put money into the Shetland deal, like Councils elsewhere. If they don't do so, members of the three unions will vote No.



Graham Spall, leader of Shetland Islands' Council's single status negotiators



What is UNISON Welfare?

By Karen Irwin, Welfare Officer

UNISON Welfare is our own unique registered charity. Sometimes its not just problems at work that can cause us difficulty. Debt, bereavement, illness or relationship breakdown can strike any of us. To try and help members facing such difficulties, UNISON has its own support service - UNISON Welfare.

This is operated through a combination of trained Caseworkers in London, Regional Officers and Welfare Officers in local Branches. We can either point you in the right direction to other agencies that may be able to help you or can help through UNISON Welfare itself.

We may be able to provide:

- **Financial assistance.** This is usually in the form of a grant to help with exceptional expenses. Application forms can be obtained from your representative or downloaded from www.unison.org.uk/welfare All applications are confidential, but you will have to provide confirmation of your financial circumstances when you apply.
- **Wellbeing breaks.** When either a family hasn't had a holiday for the past 3 years due to financial constraints or where a holiday is needed for recuperation after illness. Holidays must be taken in Scotland, England or Wales within 6 months of the grant being approved. At the moment, help with travel costs is not included. Again application forms can be downloaded or obtained from your rep.

UNISON Welfare also operates a Debtline service in conjunction with Payplan. Here, caseworkers can negotiate with your creditors to agree a repayment plan on your behalf. This service is free and all monies you pay in go towards your debt repayments, not to the service provider.

This service can be contacted on Freephone 0800 389 3302 (8am to 9pm, Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm Saturdays) or on www.debtclinic.co.uk/unison

UNISON Welfare is available to :

- Members of UNISON;
- Past members of NALGO; or
- Dependants or partners of members or deceased members.

The local branch also operates a Welfare Fund which has mainly been used to tide members over whilst an application to UNISON Welfare in London is being processed.

Contact Karen Irwin on 01595 744095 or your Rep for more details.

More Members, More Power: keep up to date

By Michelle Goudie, membership records officer

The branch numbers are steadily increasing and we currently have 846 members. If you know a colleague who would like to join forms are available from your workplace rep or you can contact me and I can send some out.

Many members have more than one job. It is essential that your subscription covers you for all jobs or you may find if you are looking for union representation that your membership does not cover you for that job.

If you currently pay your subscription by direct debit please take the time to check that your circumstances haven't changed. A change of employer, change of post or retirement may all have an affect on the amount you need to be paying for your subscription.

Thinking of retiring? If you have been a member of Unison for at least 2 consecutive years before you retire you can become a retired member for a one off payment of £15 per year. Retired members meet a couple of times a year. Please contact Donald Silk on 01595 692451 if you would like more information about the benefits of being a retired member.

So, if you **change address, get married or change post**, please get in touch to change your details. You can get a form from me or you can update your details on the Unison website www.unison.org.uk.

For further information regarding any of the above items please contact Michelle Goudie

on **01595 74459**

or email

michelle.goudie@shetland.gov.uk