

February 2025

Welcome to this sector specific newsletter put together to update members and branch reps on developments across the sector by providing a roundup of news, activities and campaigns. Please share with other colleagues across your networks and if you have news to share then please get in touch by emailing kerry.jenkins@unitetheunion.org

become a rep

Activists are the backbone of Unite. It's mainly through their hard work that we protect employees rights at work, campaign for better working practices and support those in need of help. They're the bridge between employers and employees in workplaces and negotiate on important matters to make sure that everyone's voice is heard. If you'd like to get more involved in your union now is the time to do it. Elections for workplace representatives and branch officers take place early in the first quarter of 2025 so don't miss out on your chance to become more active in Unite. Contact your workplace rep or regional office for more information here - **Become a Rep!**

sector news

CYWNFP National Industrial Sector Conference - Our Sector Conference was held in Brighton in November 2024 and brought together delegates to determine the sector's policy for next two years. The conference agreed resolutions in relation to the impact of the rise in employer National Insurance contributions on the sector, protecting future funding for drug and alcohol services, climate change and the impact of the Gaza crisis on members in the sector. In addition the conference agreed resolutions on relating to our organising and political strategy for the sector.

Fair Pay Agreement for Social Care - The Labour Government has now included the Fair Pay Agreement for the Social Care in the measures announced in the Employment Rights Bill which has commenced its legislative progress through parliament. Discussions with Government on how any pay agreement will be applied in the sector involving Unite, Unison and GMB are ongoing. Unite need to develop an organising plan for this sector and this will be discussed with Social Care Unite representatives at a sub sector meeting currently being organised.

National Care Service Scotland Bill - The bill has been suspended at stage one. Key stakeholders include trade unions, COSLA (local authorities body), and the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), which withdrew support in the latter part of 2024. Scottish Labour, Liberal Democrats, Greens and Conservatives also withdrew support, preventing cross-party backing. Last year, the SNP decided to rip up the Bute House agreement between the SNP and Scottish Greens, which means the SNP is now running as a minority government, and progressing the flagship policy to reform the social care system was no longer possible. Unite Scotland remains focused on campaigning for Social Care workers and are currently developing a new campaign.

Workplace Relations Commission - Community, Youth Work and Not for Profit members in the Republic of Ireland in Unite who provide services supplemented by the Irish government are fighting to be included in national negotiations in the Workplace Relations Commission alongside other unions representing workers in the sector. Collective negotiations agreed last

year have not been implemented across the board properly, and with negotiations being unsuccessful so far it is likely that members will be balloted for action.

Building a Sector Branch - In the Republic of Ireland CYWNfP members are building a sector branch, as currently members are spread across geographic branches. We hope this will assist in us being able to collectively organise, find common issues and support each other.

sector organising

Our organising work continues and recognition agreements have been signed with human rights organisation **Reprieve**, with the **Autonomy Institute**, an independent progressive research organisation, **Save the Children International** and **Zaccheaus 2000 Trust**, a charity that specialises in debt work and anti-poverty campaigning.

Organising campaigns for recognition continue at the **Dogs Trust**, the **Elders**, the Big Issue and at **Vauxhall Law Centre**.

sector disputes

Following strike action taken in October, November and January, our members at Knowsley-based **Livv Housing** are escalating their pay dispute with strikes running from 3 - 28 February, the longest yet, with workers walking out across the entire organisation. The dispute stems from years of below-inflation pay increases with workers rejecting the offer of a five per cent pay rise which failed to reverse the real-terms pay cuts already endured. **You can read more about the dispute here.**

We have reached agreement with **Action for Children** along with Unison in relation to reducing the current two organiser posts to one and expanding the number of lay representatives in the organisation. This decision severely impacts on our ability to organise and support our members at Action for Children.

The disputes at **UCU** and **NASUWT** are still subject to ACAS conciliation but members at both unions have renewed their mandates to take industrial action. Members at UCU took another 3 days of strike action between 9th and 11th December 2024 to increase pressure on UCU to resolve the issues of dispute. The dispute at **NEU** in relation to the workload of administrators at the Head Office in London has been resolved.

pay campaigns

JNC Pink Book – We consulted members on the Pink Book pay offer for 2024 where the LGA was offering a flat rate increase of £1290 which mirrors the offer for NJC Green Book but had rejected most of the other elements of the claim. Members rejected the pay offer, and we relayed the outcomes of union consultation exercises at a JNC meeting on 22nd November 2024 where we asked the LGA to reconsider the offer to Pink Book members. The LGA considered this request but informed the joint unions that it was unable to increase the offer. The joint unions then decided to reluctantly accept the pay offer but also asked for a timetable of meetings to discuss other elements of the pay claim and the first of these have been set. A joint circular was then issued to Local Authorities to make the pay award on 17th December 2024.

sector campaigns

The UK government has recently increased employer National Insurance contributions, adding an estimated £1.4 billion in costs for charities and not-for-profit organisations.

For drug and alcohol services, this is a devastating blow to an already underfunded sector that supports some of the most vulnerable people in our society. To make matters worse, the government's extra funding for drug and alcohol treatment services is set to end in April 2025, with no commitment to continue.

Without this support, countless services risk closure, resulting in job losses and leaving those in need of help without the care they rely on.

This will not only harm vulnerable individuals but also damage the communities these services protect and serve.

A campaign has been launched calling on the UK government to:

1. Exempt drug and alcohol charities from the National Insurance increase to ensure their financial stability and ability to support communities.
2. Guarantee future funding for drug and alcohol services beyond April 2025, providing the certainty needed to save jobs and maintain essential care.

Find more information and [sign the petition here](#) and let's protect these vital services together.

sector resources

Work, Voice, Pay – is Unite's broad industrial strategy. It is a multi-faceted approach to supporting reps to deliver for Unite members. Along with coordinating pay bargaining, researching key workplace issues, building strike-ready workplaces and developing 'leverage' campaigning, an essential part of Work Voice Pay is providing support and tools to help Unite reps with their work. You can find more information here:

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay>

Supporting mental health at work - In the past few years, the pressure on workers has been intense as they have faced government cuts, social security reforms, the increased cost of living and threats to job security, pay and conditions. The result has been elevated levels of stress, anxiety and depression which invariably has led to mental health problems across multiple workplaces. Unite reps themselves are facing increasing additional pressures and require more support in negotiating mental health and stress support programmes in the workplace. The United Minds campaign offers tools and materials to assist reps in negotiating better management processes around mental health and stress issues in the workplace.

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/unitedminds>

Online meetings and Whatsapp Groups - An number of online meetings have been held and more are being planned. A number of WhatsApp groups have also been set up providing networking opportunities with reps from across the sector. If you would like more information, then please contact **james.lazou@unitetheunion.org** or **kerry.jenkins@unitetheunion.org**

member benefits

DriverCare - was introduced to provide cover for those whose livelihood is affected by the permanent loss of their professional licence as a result of illness or injury. For a small weekly contribution the scheme provides financial benefits following the permanent Loss of Licence up to age 62. After 62, members can continue Loss of Licence cover through the Supplementary Loss of Licence (Top-Up) Scheme up to age 68. More information is available here: **<https://myunite.unitetheunion.org/hawkfile/2902/original/Job-7024-2-DRIVERCARE-EXPLAINED-v18.pdf>**

unite for our society

Our sector is massively diverse which makes it so important for us to hear from reps and members across the sector about the campaigns or the issues they are facing. Please do get in touch. You can find information and news about our sector and the issues affecting it on the **[Unite website](#)**.

If you have a story for a blog, then please details by email to **Kerry.jenkins@unitetheunion.org** - You can also support our sector by following, liking and sharing our Unite for Our Society posts on Facebook and X.

