

# UNISON Health & Safety Team, working for you

The UNISON health & safety team continue to work for our members, ensuring that workplaces are as safe as possible. In the last 12 months 22 workplace health & safety inspections have taken place.

Are you interested in becoming a UNISON shop steward, health & safety representative or both? If you would like information please contact the branch office on 0131 558 7488.

## Fire safety first

Following concerns raised by our members in Waverley Court UNISON carried out a fire safety walk around on the 11th May 2018, this covered the courtyard and first floor only.

Ten points of concern were noted and a report sent to FM and the council's fire officer to action.

UNISON carried out health & safety inspections in a number of community centres in June 2017. Management's failure to complete the fire safety concerns recorded for the Leith community centre has now resulted in UNISON requesting the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to carry out an external audit. This has now been completed following a four hour inspection and improvements are being made.

## UNISON takes a stand

While UNISON will always attempt to resolve issues in-house we have recently notified senior management that if they fail to take action on health, safety and wellbeing concerns we will request the advice and assistance of other regulatory bodies, this could include the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, SEPA and the HSE if required.

## Staffing levels, workloads & work related stress

These issues are without doubt the highest concerns for our members along with harassment and bullying. UNISON has taken every opportunity to raise our members concerns at meetings with senior management and councillors and will continue to do so.

At a recent Joint Consultative Group meeting we highlighted that 33.11% of staff were absent from work between January and March with stress, anxiety, depression or work related fatigue. Low staffing levels have resulted in restrictions in annual leave allocation and flexi leave. Staff morale throughout most departments is at an all time low.



## Grenfell Tower Vigil 14 June 2018

UNISON members, branch officers and staff attended the Edinburgh Trades Council organised vigil on the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower disaster. A silent thirty minute vigil was followed by speeches from members of the Fire Brigade Union, Edinburgh Tenants Association, Neil Findlay MSP and Ian Mullen, UNISON health & safety convener. Ian's speech can be found on the branch website. <http://unison-edinburgh.org.uk/grenfell-not-only-a-tragedy-its-a-crime/>

## Pupil support survey on violence at work

UNISON will be circulating a violence at work survey to all our pupil support members after the summer break. This follows a high increase in attacks on members in special and

mainstream schools. Concerns have been raised at the low numbers being reported on the council's health and safety dashboards which may be due to non-reporting. The EIS teachers

union have expressed interest in carrying out a similar survey in conjunction with UNISON.



## New cleaning programme for potteries

Following a health & safety inspection at Southbridge community centre, a joint inspection took place with corporate health & safety & facilities management relating to accumulations of silica dust from drying clay, this can lead to silicosis following long-term exposure. Edinburgh Scientific Services will now carry out an air quality survey.

Our members in cleaning services have now been given new cleaning guidelines and procedures. UNISON also want school potteries monitored.

## Incident reporting guidelines

The council's corporate health & safety team have distributed new guidelines to managers on the reporting of incident, accidents and near misses.

Whilst UNISON support better and more consistent reporting there has been no consultation with the trade unions on these guidelines.

UNISON have requested a meeting to review the guidelines which should be representative of our member's shifts and communications with line managers.

## Civic Site & Waste Transfer Review

UNISON has raised concerns at waste management's proposed staffing levels for the new waste transfer plants at Sighthill and Seafield. Staff cover, risk and impact assessments, health & safety, staff training on new machinery and vehicles, increased routes sizes, cost of tipping at landfills have also been raised.

Management have met with the affected staff during the 45-day consultation period which is due to conclude on 9th July.

Staff interested in VR have been asked to submit notes of interest and fortnightly meeting are taking place with the trade unions. A mid-way briefing meeting with staff took place on the 18th June. Traffic management issues continue to be a problem at both sites while construction continuous.

## Weather emergency plan review

Following the Red and Amber weather warnings in February, UNISON received a number of complaints from members in Safer & Stronger Communities, Community & Families, Health & Social Care and Place.

As a result of this UNISON requested a review of the policy. A meeting has taken place with members of the resilience team and ten points of concern have been submitted.

UNISON's request for this review has been broadly welcomed by the senior management team. Further meetings are due to take place.

## Take five risk assessments

Edinburgh Road Services management team attempted to introduce the Take 5 risk assessment in 2017, without consultation with UNISON and our members.

UNISON has stated that risk assessments were previously carried out by team leaders on the job and that untrained staff were being asked to assess every job attended. Having obtained copies of the generic risk assessments it was obvious that they were woefully

inadequate and not fit for purpose.

Before UNISON agree to any implementation the generic assessments and approved safe codes of working practices must be improved and training must be in place for managers and staff, we are still waiting to see these improvements.

Unfortunately, UNISON has since been informed that these risk assessments have been introduced in other departments including Greenspaces and Property Management. Increasingly we are having to remind managers of the Working Together Protocol.

## Thompsons solicitors doing the job for UNISON members in Scotland

The following figures (Scottish Region) are based on personal injury referrals from January to March 2018. 128 cases opened; 74 successful cases concluded; £512,271 obtained in damages; £6,922 average award in each case; £170,757 average damages per month; 2% of cases turned down, 70 wills prepared; 141 members given general free legal advice; 3 conveyancing cases opened and 1 criminal case.

## Thank you Paul, Noel & Kimberley

UNISON pay tribute and thanks to Paul Nicholson, Noel Guy and Kimberley Gollan, health & safety representatives.

After many years Paul has decided to take a break as a safety rep while Noel leaves the council to work in the voluntary sector and Kimberley has left to work in the NHS. Many thanks to you all for your years of hard work and dedication.

## Feedback to the branch

If you have any health & safety queries please contact your local health & safety representative or contact Ian Mullen, health & safety convener at the branch office on 0131 558 7488 or [branch.office@unison-edinburgh.org.uk](mailto:branch.office@unison-edinburgh.org.uk)