

UNISON Health & Safety Team, working for you

UNISON recommends rejection of the employers final pay offer 2018

Branch officers attending the UNISON Scottish Local Government Service Group Conference on the 7 September were given an update on the employer's final pay offer for 2018. The original offer was 3% for staff up to £36,000, 2% for staff earning £36,000 to £80,000. The revised offer is 3% for all staff up to

£80,000.

This offer falls well short of our claim for 6.5%. Our pay has been cut by 16% in real terms since 2010. UNISON's local government negotiating team are recommending rejection of this offer.

A consultative ballot will be distributed in due course and your

branch would urge all members to return your ballot forms as soon as possible.



Pupil support assistants and nursery nurses violence at work survey

August's newsletter reported our intention to survey PSA and nursery nurse members. The Violence at Work Survey, circulated on the 3 September will close on the 12 October. We urge all our members to complete the survey and return it to the branch office.

UNISON and the EIS teacher's union raised concerns at the council health and safety forum that reported incidents remain low. Council figures for quarter two were; 191 employee injuries involving violence and aggression out of a total of 255 injuries (75%) representing 78% of all staff injuries. Staff injuries involving violence and aggression per sector were recorded as; 111 in special schools, 74 in primary schools, 1 in a secondary school, 4 in nursery and early learning and 1 in a library.

Pauline Henderson, Convener for Communities and Families commented: "all areas in

Communities and Families are affected by violent and anti-social behavior."

"It is imperative that staff report incidents and near misses so that a true picture of the problem is given."

"Management should be supporting staff, recording incidents and members should be aware that UNISON, their union will support and fight on their behalf to address this issue and improve their working environment."

Respect our Cleaning Staff

UNISON members in Edinburgh Cleaning Services are amongst the lowest paid staff in the council. Predominately women, they deserve no less respect than any other member of staff. However, there is an increased trend in complaints from members especially in schools. The attitude of "just leave to the cleaner" is not acceptable.

Threats of disciplinary action, harassment, bullying and increased workloads have all lead

to high stress levels amongst staff. One member reported that she was verbally threatened that if she raised concerns with the union, she would not get the shift or preferred work location when the delayed cleaning review starts. We've heard of shift allowances being withheld, using the excuse that additional payments can't be made until the review is concluded.

Others reported that clinical waste contracts had been cancelled as it is now expected that "the cleaners will do it". UNISON is clear on this; our members do not handle or dispose of clinical waste.

Ian Mullen, Health and Safety convener said: "UNISON will not tolerate our members being bullied, harassed or forced to carry out work involving the disposal of clinical waste. Cleaning staff deserve to work in a good environment without threats and deserve to be treated with the same respect and dignity as all other staff."

UNISON and Thompson's winning for members

UNISON and Thompson's Solicitors won over £1m for members in personal injury claims from April to June this year.

The headline statistics are: 172 cases open; 102 successful cases; £1,030,608 obtained in damages; £10,104 average damages awarded in each case; £343,536 average damages per month; 2% of cases turned down; 91 wills prepared; 121 members were given general free legal advice; 6 conveyancing cases opened and three criminal cases.

Winter weather emergency planning

March 2018 saw the worst weather since 2010, with public transport suspended and numerous members of staff unable to attend work or make their way home.

UNISON recognised the efforts made by all staff during this period, however, individual departments had not prepared contingency plans for their staff. This resulted in non-essential staff walking miles to work/home, a lack of communication, transportation, personal protective equipment and welfare facilities were all highlighted as concerns by our members.

Following weeks of information gathering, UNISON convened a meeting with the Resilience team to discuss where improvements could be made.

A review of the emergency plan was supported by the senior management team. UNISON has identified further concerns following the recent Amber

Warning in September.

Ian Mullen, Health and Safety Convener said: "Strategic plans should be in place which are specific to each section of work. I would urge all members and colleagues to raise this issue with their line managers. The health, safety and wellbeing of staff and service users is a priority and we shouldn't have to wait on warnings being issued."

As preparations are made for another winter, the annual shout for volunteers to join the winter team has gone out on the Orb. UNISON has asked management to make clear to volunteers that the 'Element 4' payment will not be paid unless contractually obligated.

Low staffing levels at crisis point

Year-on-year cuts in the council budget are having a dramatic effect on services provided to Edinburgh residents. Many departments are now surviving on the goodwill of staff, but this is having a detrimental effect on colleagues' health and wellbeing.

Long hours, heavy workloads and unachievable targets are a few of the reasons highlighted by UNISON members, many of whom have stated they are at breaking point but fear taking time off work.

UNISON Health and Safety Convener Ian Mullen said: "We are aware that many council departments are running with vacant posts. These are being temporarily filled by agency workers or staff on voluntary overtime.

"Staff are working in areas that they have little or no experience in and are often subjected to threatening and abusive behaviour. UNISON will continue to campaign for vacant posts to be filled. It is not acceptable or cost effective to have staff on the

redeployment list while full time posts remain vacant and agency costs per quarter run into £millions."

Health at Work Menopause and perimenopause

September's branch meeting overwhelmingly approved a motion on menopause and perimenopause as our campaign for better health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace progresses forward. Although rarely discussed at work this is a natural stage of life that millions of women workers are going through now or will experience in the future.

This branch is committed to offering respect, support and assistance and call on CEC and other employers to ensure that the impact of menopause and perimenopause on female colleagues is reflected in the sickness absence policy and procedures. We also recognise and will call on employers to recognise that trans men can also experience menopause and perimenopause.

UNISON disappointment at the lack of action by waste management

Over the last ten months UNISON have consistently raised the same issues over health and safety in waste management, few are addressed.

Being told to be "patient" or "there's no quick fix" isn't included in the council's duty of care nor would it sit well with the HSE. Tom Howorth, UNISON Convener for Place said, "Whilst I appreciate that we have constructive health and safety meetings with management, the lack of real change is concerning. The health and safety of our members in waste and cleansing must be guaranteed."

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 branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk