

UNISON leads in campaign for HAVS compensation

UNISON are working with the other Trade Unions to campaign for compensation for City of Edinburgh Council manual workers affected by Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and to raise awareness about the industrial disease.

Around 600 workers are thought to be potentially affected by the disease, which irreparably damages the nerves, joints and muscles of workers who use power tools over prolonged periods of time.

The union campaign comes after revelations that the Council's monitoring of staff for HAVS was deemed inadequate by the Health and Safety Executive who have issued two improvement notices to the Council.

UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch Health and Safety Officer Dave McConnell explains: "The Council have failed to properly monitor the use of power tools to ensure that workers are not harmed by their job. This campaign is to encourage anyone whose health has already been harmed to look at seeking compensation for their disability."

UNISON is advising members who believe that

'The Council have failed to properly monitor the use of power tools... anyone whose health has been harmed should look at seeking compensation for their disability'

they have been affected by HAVS to contact their local steward.

SYMPTOMS OF HAND ARM VIBRATION SYNDROME

- Tingling 'whiteness' or numbness in the fingers.
- Loss of manual dexterity
- Muscle Fatigue & reduced hand grip strength
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Help us prevent future safety issues

Help UNISON prevent future health and safety issues by becoming a Health and Safety Representative.

Full training is provided and you are given paid time off for training and to conduct your duties. For more information contact the branch office.



Find out the truth about sickness absence in a new UNISON survey
See Page 3

Use your vote for services on May 3 - Election Hustings

Sickness Absence Policy- Decision Time

Become a Health & Safety Representative

Modernising Pay Appeals Update

UNISON Welfare

Membership Growth

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www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk

UNISON considers Mod Pay outcomes

Appeals against Modernising Pay gradings are nearly completed eighteen months after the scheme was imposed in October 2010.

Over 300 appeals were submitted in the wake of the pay modernisation exercise and initial analysis seems to suggest that appeal results have varied dramatically. As a



Tam McKirdy
'Proper analysis needed'

result, UNISON will be scrutinising the results closely.

Service Conditions Convener Tam McKirdy

said: "We need to properly analyse the results of the appeals to get a clearer picture of how the process has worked."

A report based on the results of the appeals is being prepared by members of the service conditions team and will help frame the next steps that UNISON take in this process.

Negotiations brief: What's changed in the final offer on sickness absence?

Negotiations on the proposed new sickness absence policy have come to an end and the Branch Committee will be taking a view in May.

Meanwhile stewards have been briefed and will be consulting members in workplaces.

Here we outline the main changes achieved since the policy was first put to the unions.

○ *Fit Note needed for first day of absence*
Removed

○ *No discretion for individual circumstances*
Discretion now allowed (with clear guidelines to ensure fairness in compliance with Council supportive procedures)

○ *Trigger level 3 instances in 12 months*
Same, but important discretion in new Tool Kit

○ *Trigger level 6 days absence in 12 months*
Moved to 8 days in 12 months

○ *Stage One warning would mean no pay step*
New 'no action' option and discretion makes this no longer automatic

○ *Policy would be retrospective*
Talks to be concluded on transition

○ *No option to take 'no action'*
Toolkit introduces option to take no action

○ *Individual areas able to set stricter targets:*
Removed

○ *Nurse-led reporting measures*
No reference in new policy

○ *Concerns about management support and training*
Management training and focus on supportive measures to be introduced

○ *No negotiations on Toolkit*
Negotiations with unions on Tool Kit and implementation

New elements in final draft

- Agreement to evaluate causes of high absence in particular areas, and work with the union on issues like stress, work related risks and illnesses.
- Agreement for unions to provide examples to inform areas for discretion
- More references to supportive measures than in the original 1998 document.
- Much clearer up to date references to legislation like DDA etc.
- Case conferences to look at complex cases and medical redeployment
- More emphasis on return to work meetings and supportive policies

What happens next?

UNISON has mounted the widest ever consultation on this

UNISON fears impact of tax credit cuts on members

The recent budget announced by George Osborne announced cuts to tax credits that would hit hundreds of thousands of low paid workers.

UNISON fears that this could be enough to see low paid families fall below the breadline - especially after 3 years of pay freezes.

If you are struggling to make ends meet then you may be eligible for financial assistance from UNISON Welfare.

Further information is available through your local steward, online at www.unison.org.uk/welfare/ or through our welfare officers at the branch.

policy with one draft going out to every member, a bulletin, leaflet and discussion at the AGM and in stewards committees

- Make sure you have a workplace meeting
- Read the new policy - all the info is on the website - and you can give your views there

Important: The negotiators are clear that this offer is the best that can be achieved through negotiation, and rejection will take us back to the previous draft and require significant action to gain any changes.

UNISON Scotland survey uncovers the truth about sickness absence

Nearly half of public sector workers polled in a recent UNISON Scotland survey said sickness absence policies encourage staff to turn up ill or injured to work.

A quarter of workers (25%) said they had worked in the last month when too ill to do so, while almost two thirds (60%) said they had worked when ill during the past year.

The findings are the result of a UNISON survey which looks at the reality of sickness absence policies in Scotland and provides further evidence to dispel the myth that public sector workers are prone to taking sick leave.

One in seven (14%) of those polled said the sickness absence policy at their work is "unfair" and more than a quarter (26%) said the policy is



Dave Watson
"Sickie culture not the reality in Scotland"

badly implemented by management.

Scott Donohoe, Chair of UNISON's Scottish Health and Safety Committee said: "Given the sort of jobs UNISON members do, we should be concerned that staff are going to work when they are too ill to do so. Of even more concern is the evidence of poor sickness absence policies. From this

survey it appears that many public service employers in Scotland see managing sickness absence as forcing employees back to work as soon as possible, or disciplining those who are off work more regularly than others."

Dave Watson, UNISON's Scottish Organiser adds: "This survey shows that the reality in Scotland is a long way from the 'sickie' culture that is often portrayed. Absence rates have been falling over time and it is a myth that there are easy savings from new policies that assume that sickness absence is mostly skiving.

"Positive sickness absence policies are important, but there is most to gain from tackling the causes of absence and helping people return to work."

UNISON enjoys 2012 Membership Boom

UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch has experienced a huge rise in membership over the first three months of the year.

Over 300 members joined the union between January and March

which has boosted the number of members in the Branch by 2.2% and means that Edinburgh is at the vanguard of recruitment in Scotland.

Branch President John Stevenson

said, "I'm delighted by the increase in membership. The recent successes of UNISON in the privatisation battle and the equal pay claims are clearly having a significant impact."

Got an equal pay claim lodged?

The Branch Office is receiving many calls about equal pay claims. If you already have a claim lodged, it is being dealt with by Thompsons solicitors and you need to send any supplementary questions to Thompsons in writing. For Frequently Asked Questions, see the website

Keep up to date with UNISON

The Branch has had a website for many years but did you know we are also on a blog, Facebook and Twitter? If you follow us on Twitter you can get breaking news direct to your mobile phone

Website: www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/unison.edinburgh
Twitter: @unisonedin
Blog: www.unisonedinburgh.blogspot.co.uk

3 May Vote: Quiz the Candidates!

The upcoming elections on 3 May promise to be fiercely contested by all the major political parties. UNISON will be holding a hustings event that will allow you the opportunity to put your questions to the candidates.

The event is being held at St Augustines Church on George IV Bridge on 26 April and will run between 1800 and 2000. The UNISON event is one of a series of Hustings that are being held throughout the city in the run up to the vote on May 3.

UPCOMING EDINBURGH HUSTINGS EVENTS

UNISON Hustings:
26 April: St Augustine's Church,
George IV Bridge
1800-2000

UNISON calls for improvements in public services instead of cuts

You can't cut your way to better public services, UNISON has warned Scotland's councils.

UNISON's manifesto for the local government elections outlines the union's alternative - a radical reform of local government around five key democratic principles and direct involvement of users and staff in the design of local public services.

Lilian Macer, UNISON Scotland Convener, said:

"The cuts are hurting - as we warned they would. But they're not working. You can't cut



**You value them
 so vote for them**
**Use your vote
 for public services
 on May 3**

10 Questions to ask candidates

your way to better services.

"And you can't privatise or outsource your way to better services. Local government has to make a radical, democratic change - by involving users and staff directly in service design.

"What we want is real improvement - not the

failed dogma of privatisation and outsourcing. When they've been subjected to democratic scrutiny, experience shows they've fallen apart - like Edinburgh's costly privatisation project.

"Centrally driven initiatives cannot provide the answers to the

complex needs of our diverse communities.

"People need to have a real say in how services are delivered in their communities. Only full involvement of users and staff in service design and delivery will guarantee that."

Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish Secretary adds: "Through the principles of Democracy, Fairness, Excellence, Partnership and Investment, local government can support our communities through this crisis - and lead the way out of the crisis through investment in those communities".

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