

UNISON Health & Safety Team, working for you

UNISON in Dispute over Disbanding of the Asbestos and Surveying Team

UNISON members in Edinburgh Scientific Services (ESS) Asbestos and Surveying team were left stunned in March following the decision by the City Leadership Team to suspend then disband the team without consultation with elected members, staff or their representatives.

Ian Mullen, UNISON Health & Safety Convener said;

Unfortunately, we cannot go into detail as to why this decision was taken only weeks after the team were informed that a temporary suspension would be lifted and normal surveying duties would be resumed. Needless to say, we believe the way our members have been treated is disgraceful and UNISON have taken every opportunity to raise our concerns at the highest level. As an Enforcing Authority we have a legal obligation to have measures in place to monitor, review and enforce outsourced surveying work. UNISON do not believe these measures are in place. Elected members should be demanding an explanation as there are financial implications to the council which have not been addressed as copies of the Financial Impact Assessment have not been forthcoming.

Members of the team, who are all long serving and highly trained are now being offered short term placements in other departments, allegedly until a final decision has been made on the team's future. Requests for written clarification and copies of the relevant correspondence leading up to this decision have been met with total resistance, leaving UNISON questioning whether there really is a Working in Partnership agreement when it comes to transparency and co-operation.

Edinburgh Road Services

Well we didn't have the 'Beast from the East' this winter, nevertheless, all the staff and volunteers did a great job of keeping our roads and footpaths free from ice and snow hazards and should be congratulated.

More recently UNISON have been working closely with our members and the management team to identify a training needs analysis, fit for purpose, given that road maintenance has now taken over from construction as the most hazardous working environment. Fundamental to the health, safety and wellbeing of our road workers is accredited training on all aspects of fleet and plant. The long-term health effects of silica dust from dry cutting, the use of PPE and proper health surveillance has to be a priority. Joint talks with fleet maintenance have been productive in

identifying future procurement of heavy fleet and plant, most of the current fleet being ten to fifteen years old.

UNISON Stress Survey 2019

The results of the UNISON Stress Survey 2019 will be circulated late June, early July. This is later than first anticipated as there was a delay in circulating the survey to members.

UNISON and Thompsons Solicitors Working for You

Thompsons have reported an increase in successful cases in the quarter January to March 2019, with more than double the amount obtained in damages in comparison to the previous quarter.

Requests for free legal advice also remain high.

The headline statistics for January to March are:

91 cases opened; 87 successful cases concluded; £1,258,325 obtained in damages; £14,463 average award in each case; £419,441 average damages per month; 2% of cases turned down; 114 wills prepared; 139 members were given general free legal advice; 0 conveyancing cases opened and 2 criminal case taken on.



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P&P by UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch, 10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh EH1 1LT 0131 558 7488

Are You a Lone Worker?

When was the last time you saw or discussed your Risk Assessment, Safe Codes of Working Practice (SCoWP) or the council Lone Working Policy with your line manager?

UNISON continue to raise our concerns that members and colleagues are being placed in potentially abusive or volatile situations.

Ian Mullen, UNISON Health & Safety Convener said;

Front line staff are particularly vulnerable to threatening and abusive behaviour, it's generally agreed that generic Risk Assessments are not fit for purpose. Risk Assessments have to be reflective of individual workplaces and line managers should be engaging with their staff in drafting work specific Risk Assessments, which should be updated annually or where there has been a fundamental change in working practices.

Over the last few years the council have tried to reduce management responsibility by introducing the TAKE 5 Risk Assessment, relying mainly on untrained staff to assess their own work environment. UNISON oppose the introduction of TAKE 5 as this has legal implications for our members, which we reported on in our December Newsletter.

Further details can be found on the branch website.

UNISON Young Members Section

Are you starting out in your working career, just left school, college or work experience?

Being a young person coming into a new working environment can be an anxious time. Concerns about how you will get along with

your colleagues, your workload or how you will be treated can be stressful.

Young workers are entering employment at a time of change such as budget cuts, job insecurity, no defined retirement age, pension changes and rapidly changing technology. You may also be subject to bullying and harassment so don't wait until the above issues affect you.

UNISON have a young activist section and are looking to increase our membership and representation in this area. If you are under 25 years of age and interested in becoming a member or activist please contact the branch office on 0131 558 7488 or check out our website at www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk for further details.

School Holiday Activity Programme

With the school holidays approaching there may be a number of activity programmes for young people to enjoy, some may include bouncy castles and other types of inflatables. In the last couple of years the media have reported on a number of high profile incidents involving inflatables that have unfortunately led to injury, sometimes these incidents are caused in the most inconspicuous circumstances, such as unsupervised adult participation.

In May, UNISON met with managers from Community & Families to discuss health, safety and wellbeing issues as some of these self organised activities take place on council estates. A number of safety measures were agreed including the securing of inflatables, supervision, risk assessments and insurance requirements. If you are involved

in an activity programme or know someone who is and have any concerns then further guidance can be obtained from the HSE and RoSPA websites. We all want our young people to enjoy their holidays, so be safe.

UNISON want YOU

It's a well-known fact that unionised workplaces are more organised and safer. UNISON want the best working environment possible for our members and colleagues and are looking to extend our team into as many workplaces as possible. If you think the same way please consider becoming a shop steward, health and safety representative or both. Full training is available and a council facility time agreement is in place.

Grenfell Tower Vigil 14 June 2019

Approximately 100 activists and supporters attended the second anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. A thirty-minute silent vigil was held followed by speeches. Ian Mullen, UNISON Health & Safety Convener's speech can be found on our website at www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk. The vigil was organised by Edinburgh Trades Council and compered by our Branch Chair Duncan Smith (pictured below).



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