

UP FRONT

Highland Healthcare Branch Newsletter

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UNISON MEMBERS ACCEPT NHS PAY OFFER



UNISON members have voted overwhelmingly to accept the NHS pay offer, which will see the majority of NHS workers receive a 4% pay increase.

UNISON, Scotland's largest NHS union, announced the result of its ballot on Wednesday 12 May 2021 and says it will now be calling on the new Cabinet Secretary for Health to implement the pay deal as soon as possible.

Responding to the vote, UNISON's Head of Health Willie Duffy, said: "This pay rise represents a fair increase for our members and means the majority of our NHS staff will receive a pay increase of at least 4%, which will be backdated to December.

"The fact that 84% of those who took part in the ballot voted in favour of the pay offer shows how much this pay increase means to our members. Scotland's health workers go above and beyond to keep our NHS services running – not just during the pandemic but each and every day – and we're de-

lighted to have secured them a fair pay increase."

Tam Waterson, Chair of UNISON's Health Committee, said: "Through our negotiating and campaigning, UNISON managed to bring talks with the Scottish Government forward from June to March. We negotiated a fair offer that is weighted towards the lowest paid workers in the NHS.

"UNISON Scotland's Health Committee recommended acceptance of this pay offer and our members overwhelmingly agreed. We will now be writing to the new Health Secretary to ask that the pay deal is implemented without delay."

The pay deal will be backdated to 1 December and will see health workers on Agenda for Change (AfC) pay bands 5-7 given a 4% uplift for 2021-22. Staff on bands 1-4 who currently earn £24,973 or less will receive a flat rise of £1,009, while staff on the highest bands 8-9 will receive an increase of 2% or less.

UNISON is Scotland's largest NHS trade union. UNISON members on Agenda for Change pay grades were eligible to take part in the ballot. Almost 50,000 members were balloted and 35% voted – with 84% voting to accept the pay offer.

For more information, go to:

[Health Pay 2021 - UNISON Scotland \(unison-scotland.org\)](https://www.unison-scotland.org/health-pay-2021)

ARGYLL & BUTE UNISON HUSTINGS

On 27 April 2021, UNISON in Argyll & Bute held a Virtual Hustings as Mike Russell, MSP, was not standing again for his post. All four parties standing local candidates were invited. Three responded to attend: the Scottish Labour candidate, Lewis Whyte; the Scottish Liberal Democrats candidate, Alan Reid; and the Scottish National Party candidate, Jenni Minto. Unfortunately, Jenni Minto had a personal emergency and could not attend on the night and another SNP representative wasn't available. However, the same questions candidates were asked on the night were sent to the SNP candidate and were fed back to those who attended. Though mostly attended by UNISON activists, the questions were refreshingly local, not speaking about national manifesto issues, but raising pressing local issues such as the culture and staff shortages in the NHS in Argyll & Bute, support for care home staff in the HSCP, the relationships between UNISON and our local representatives and tourism's affects on our region, both positively and negatively, and what solutions the candidates could offer to all of the above. UNISON looks forward to continuing to support its members political involvement through events such as these in future, not least because these events put our members' issues front and centre of vital political awareness.

Work for Hotel Services

Since the start of Covid, it has come to the attention of many UNISON activists across Argyll & Bute that our members in Hotel Services (Domestic, Catering and Portering colleagues) have been working beyond what was typical before Covid and this doesn't seem to be easing even after the service returns to 'post-Covid' working. This has been raised through several forums and currently Britt Doughty-Godchaux, Convener for UNISON Highland Healthcare Branch, is working with the Head of Facilities in North Highland and HR to prepare a proposal that will address this overworking. If you are a member working in any of these areas and want to share your experiences, positive or negative, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Britt on 07930 710986 or britt.doughty-godchaux@nhs.scot.



Members only: new Argyll & Bute Facebook group coming soon!

A new closed Facebook group for UNISON Health/NHS staff in Argyll & Bute should be up and running soon. Stewards are keen that members have a place where they can talk about their work experience with other members and stewards and discuss the issues that matter to staff. As many UNISON members use Facebook, stewards felt this would be a great opportunity to hear more about what is going on and share the work UNISON is doing on members' behalf. The page will have a community conduct agreement and all comments will be moderated to ensure that the space is as constructive, supportive and fun as possible! An invite to all current members will be sent out soon. Keep your eyes out to engage more with fellow members and stewards across Argyll & Bute!

If this works well, The Branch will then look at rolling out a similar approach for members in the Highland Council area as well.

Branch Committee Meeting 13 May

Branch meetings are now back to monthly. We generally get a good attendance from Branch Officers, other reps, and UNISON Organising staff. Some of the issues discussed at the last meeting were:

- Concern around bullying and harassment appeals – we are going to take this forward at a Scottish level (given that the policies are “Once for Scotland” not NHS Highland policies)
- Argyll and Bute closed Facebook page for members only – you can read about this elsewhere in this issue
- Public holidays and annual leave – we may have identified an inconsistency around this, and it's going to be followed up with relevant local management in the first instance
- Reaccreditation and training for UNISON reps – reps are being directed to online training at present
- Lateral Flow Testing issues – as elsewhere, NHS Highland is coming under pressure to increase take up of this (voluntary) testing. We suggested this be paid time for staff to undertake but (at present) this has not been agreed. One to watch
- Concerns around workload – will be followed up with NHS Highland in the first instance, but if there is no agreement there, we may run a Branch survey on this

Meeting minutes are available if any member wishes to access these. Please contact the UNISON office if you would like to receive them (tel 01463 715891 or email inverness.office@unison.co.uk)

NHS Highland culture staff survey

At the time of writing, we don't know exactly what this will be called - but we strongly encourage members to complete the survey. It should take less than 10 minutes, and there will be a 3 week "window" in June for this to take place. It will be great to get as many NHS Highland staff as possible completing it - and managers should be supporting staff and helping with access to IT, so everyone can take part. If you encounter any difficulties, please contact the Branch (tel 01463 715891 or email inverness.office@unison.co.uk). The survey will also be open to colleagues in Argyll and Bute in the health and social care partnership, who are employed by Argyll and Bute Council. There will be more information circulated on this as the survey goes live.

Don't Do Politics?

You will have heard of the phrase "I don't do politics". Indeed I might have said this myself. However I had a growing realisation that if you don't do politics, politics will nevertheless "do" you.

As an individual it's hard to make a difference. It sometimes seems that no matter how well you make your point, how right you are and how wrong everyone else is, it can seem impossible to win some arguments. Writing a letter to your MSP or MP can seem like a pointless exercise. Why waste your time when you could just moan to your mates down the pub (or on social media!) and hope someone else sorts it out?

There's a parallel issue

here too with being a member of a trade union. It has to be said, it's brilliant that there has been a large turnout in the pay ballot vote - and a very clear result. This is the difference we can make as a collective - when we engage together.

Sometimes a single letter to an MSP can be ineffective. However, if you receive a reply you don't agree with, you can always write back and say exactly what you would like him or her to do. After all, they've just been re-elected to serve and support their constituents - this means us! Very few debates are one sided and often there are no right or wrong answers. If you engage in dialogue you may occasionally learn some-

thing or change your opinion as a result of debate. But just as you may change your opinion, so might they.

UNISON is an influential organisation, our pay campaign ballot result was (rightly) on local and national news. We can make a difference, again, especially when we act together.

In terms of engagement, you can also read elsewhere in this issue about a new Facebook page for members, which we're planning initially in Argyll and Bute, but will extend if it's successful. So if that's you, do think about getting involved.

Similarly you may sometimes feel that consulta-

CASE WON



Details of this case have been anonymised.

UNISON has won a settlement for a member against an employer who failed in their obligations under a transfer and dismissed our member on what amounted to a redundancy. The settlement figure was over £12k following legal support provided as part of their membership of the union.

The following are snippets from the UNISON Scottish Disabled Members Committee Spring 2021 Newsletter:

Fairer Scotland for Disabled People - Employment Action Plan: Progress Report, 30 March 2021

An update on the Scottish Government's progress to reducing the disability employment gap by at least half by 2038.

This includes analysis of the national performance framework's indicators from the perspective of disabled people, views from the Disability Summit on what the Government should focus on for disabled people.

#OurVoiceOurRights



National charities, Enable Scotland, the National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism have joined forces to call on the major political parties in Scotland to commit to the creation of a Commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning disability to protect and uphold their rights. For more info: <https://ourvoiceourrights.org>

Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Disabled People in Great Britain Survey, Office for National Statistics

The survey results, published in November 2020, consider the impact of Covid-19 on disabled people, including their concerns, access to healthcare, and wellbeing.

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

UNISON members in Scotland who need advice during Coronavirus



Please speak to your workplace rep first. If possible.



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Aberdeen: 01224 620624
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When you call us you will be asked to leave a message, please do and we will get back to you as soon as we can.



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