

Grapevine



The Official Newsletter of *Angus Council Branch*

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JOB EVALUATION

Coming soon to a Council near you



Recent headlines about the troubles in Moray & Aberdeen City, after Councils issued letters telling staff that - as a result of job evaluation - they could lose thousands in pay, has thrown the whole exercise into sharp focus.

Alongside this was the appearance in Scotland of a firm of lawyers who have made their name (and money) seeking out equal pay claims in parts of England.

The job evaluation exercise carried out by Moray and Aberdeen City were in response to the provisions of the Single Status agreement of 1999, which is a Scottish agreement between Scottish Employers and the Trade Unions. It was designed to harmonise pay and conditions, promote equality and eliminate discriminatory practices in employment. It tries to ensure compliance with equal pay legislation, and requires action from employers to ensure fair and non-discriminatory grading and pay structures.

In UNISON Angus Council, the Branch Secretary, Kate Leiper, has been deeply involved in the process from the beginning, looking out for members interests and ensure that

fairness is applied. Some of you may have been interviewed for the process, and now the points being allocated to the positions are currently being validated. This process is programmed to be complete by the end of 2005. The pay and grading structure will then be created, with the positions finally being matched to the new pay and grading structure.

The Council will then inform staff of their position on the pay grading in March 2006. It is understood that the large majority of staff will stay as is, whilst some will have pay rises and there is a possibility of pay drops. Aberdeenshire Council have issued all staff with letters promising no pay drops, however Angus has not offered this to date.

An appeals procedure will be available to anyone who feels they have been unfairly assessed, however until March 2006 all we can do is wait.

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Unison - Angus Council Branch, FREEPOST SC07380, FORFAR, DD8 1ZR



PROPOSED CHANGES CAUSES ANGER

UNISON members at Rossie Secure Accommodation Services near Montrose are up in arms over proposed cuts and changes to rotas.

The RSAS management are looking to make percentage savings. This resulted in a varied drop in staff salaries over the members. "The mood in Rossie is not happy, with staff deeply upset and annoyed at the management over these proposed cuts and changes" said UNISON Steward Paul Hartley.

UNISON Branch Secretary Kate Leiper has held meetings with members who are strongly in support of industrial action if required. It is however hoped to head off any action.

"upset and annoyed"

Rossie has 70 UNISON members out of the approx 120 staff, so industrial action could cause severe problems for the management. Members affected by these changes range from care staff to cleaners and gardeners.

The rotas cause great disruption to members lives outside their work, especially for those with childcare arrangements.

The Centre, one of only a handful in Scotland, holds up to 30 children or young adults who have been sent there by the courts or Children's Panel.

Meetings between unions and RSAS Management are continuing, with two more planned for October.



Every 10 years the Government requires trade unions to ballot their members on having a political fund. The purpose of this fund is to ensure that unions have a political voice, can pay for advertising and maintain an affiliated political fund. 287,387 members participated in the recent ballot. The result was that 85% voted to retain the political fund. The Affiliated Political Fund is now known as the Labour Link.

The last meeting of the national Labour Link Committee was held in Brighton after the TUC annual congress. Alan Cowan attended, from Angus Council Branch as the Scottish regional delegate on the Committee. Items discussed included:

- Unisons voice within the Labour Party,
 - Reforming the national policy forum within the Labour Party,
- Opposition to "Marketisation of the National Health Service" will be included in a contemporary Motion to National Labour Party Conference. The new guidance to Primary Care Trusts in England and Strategic Health Authorities states that the PCT will now commission instead of deliver services. This guidance does not impact on Scotland but UNISON Scotland will need to ensure that the privatisation of services is not promoted within the Scottish Parliament.

Steve Warwick, Chair of National Labour link Committee said "It is important that UNISON members start to use the Labour Link. We are an integrated part of UNISON and members need to accept that we have a role to play to influence the Labour party to support more UNISON policies."

Steve used examples of pressure on MPs to support UNISON policy in Westminster including promoting the Early Day Motion on Pensions. Often this type of work is not publicised as a UNISON success in promoting policy in our members' interests.

The Scottish Labour Link Committee have been working with other unions on "Revitalise the Scottish Labour" The Initiative seeks to gather a broad base of support to promote democracy and accountability. For more information see the website at <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/labourlink/index.html>

The annual UNISON Scottish Labour Link Forum will be held on Saturday 5th November in UNISON House, Glasgow. If you want to know more details about this or anything else to do with Labour link, please contact Alan Cowan at the branch office or on 01307 473179.

You can Telephone or Fax the Office

01307 468950

Health & Safety

FAQ: Working at Height

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 came into effect from the 6th of April 2005. The Regulations will apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury.

The Regulations place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person that controls the work of others to the extent of their control (for example facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height). The Regulations will not apply to the provision of paid instruction or leadership in caving or climbing by way of sport, recreation, team building or similar activities.

As part of the Regulations, duty holders must ensure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised;
- those involved in work at height are competent;
- the risks from work at height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used;
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled; and
- equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained.

The Regulations include Schedules giving requirements for existing places of work and means of access for work at height, collective fall prevention (e.g. guardrails and working platforms), collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc), personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, fall arrest and rope access) and ladders.

There is a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height. Duty holders must:

- avoid work at height where they can;
- use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where

they cannot avoid working at height; and

- where they cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

Our key messages to duty holders are:

- those following good practice for work at height now should already be doing enough to comply with these Regulations;
- follow the risk assessments you have carried out for work at height activities and make sure all work at height is planned, organised and carried out by competent persons;
- follow the hierarchy for managing risks from work at height - take steps to avoid, prevent or reduce risks; and
- choose the right work equipment and select collective measures to prevent falls (such as guardrails and working platforms) before other measures which may only mitigate the distance and consequences of a fall (such as nets or airbags) or which may only provide personal protection from a fall.

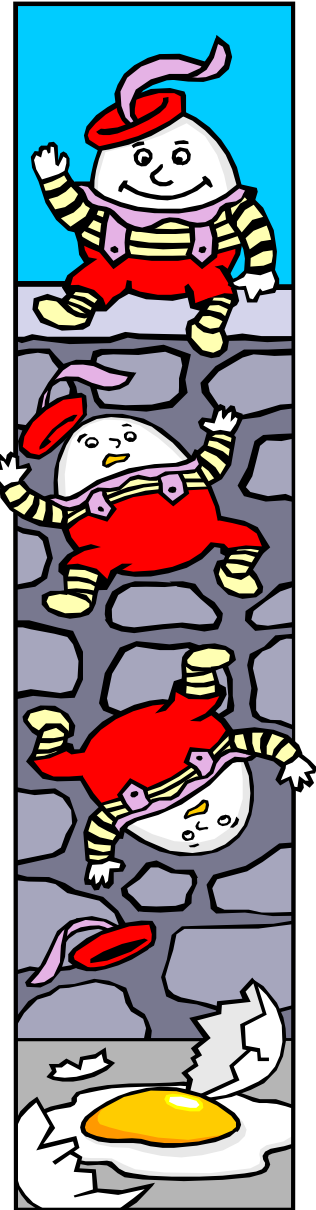
A full copy of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 is available at

<http://www.legislation.hms.gov.uk/si/si2005/20050735.htm>

HSE has also published a brief guide to the Regulations which can be found at

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

A question and answer brief has been developed aimed at people who work at height in construction. Visit the HSE Construction website for more information at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction>.



Have you had a fall, trip or slip at work? If so call the local UNISON office. Free legal help and advice from our solicitors, Thompsons, is available to all members who have paid 13 weeks membership and claims are not retrospective to the 13 week date.

You can Email the Office

office@unison-angus.org.uk

Snippets

Thinking of joining UNISON?

You may be reading this but not a member. Why not get your own copy

instead of trying to overhear what you UNISON colleagues are talking about. Come into the body o' the kirk by joining UNISON today. Contact the UNISON Office for a form or download one from our website at:

www.unison-angus.org.uk

The 13 week rule?

Please note that if you are thinking of joining UNISON because you now have a problem, then the Branch cannot give legal assistance until you have paid 13 weeks full subscription. Also the advice cannot be retrospective. So why not join now to save any worry!

Pension Threats

This is still rumbling on with the media reporting last week of possible strike action by local government workers, including UNISON members. The Branch to-date has not had a call for strike action however this cannot be ruled out, as the latest news is that the new proposals are worse than those previously issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. You will be informed if the Branch receive any further details.

Registration of Social Workers

Under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 all Social workers are required to be registered by 1 September 2005. If you are not then get registered immediately. Please note that our caring employer does not pay for the registration.

Welfare: Long Term Sick

Please contact the UNISON Office if you have a UNISON colleague who has been off sick for more than 4 weeks. UNISON Welfare usually arrange delivery of flowers or vouchers to members who have been sick for more than 4 weeks, however we usually only find out about it by accident. So the next time the seat next to you has been empty for more than 4 weeks contact Allan Fegen through the UNISON office, and make your sick colleague's day better.

2005 AGM

The 2005 Annual General Meeting was held in the Letham Hotel on Monday 28 Feb 2005 at 6:00pm.

We were quorate with just over 100 members in attendance. It comes round so fast as the venue and date of the 2006 AGM will be in the next issue of The Grapevine in late November.

The following were elected as Branch Committee Members:

Branch Chair	<i>Allan Fegen</i>	Law & Admin	<i>Shona Currie</i>
Branch Secretary	<i>Kate Leiper</i>	Housing	<i>Neil Christie</i>
Treasurer	<i>Janet Hutchison</i>	Finance	<i>Darren O'Shea</i>
H&S Officer	<i>Louise Trayner</i>	Leisure Services	<i>Sandy Boyd</i>
Comms Officer	<i>Bob Bruce</i>	IT	<i>Bill White</i>
Education Officer	<i>Allan Cowan</i>	Social Work	<i>Barbara Cowan</i>
Equal Opps Officer	<i>Steve Milne</i>	E&CP	<i>Colin Murdoch</i>
Welfare Officer	<i>Allan Fegen</i>	TVJB	<i>George Patullo</i>
APF Officer	<i>Vacant</i>		

The 2006 AGM is usually mid to late February, so make it a date in 2006!

PAY CLAIM 2006

UNISON Scotland are currently requesting the feelings of the branches regarding next year's pay claim. They are asking what percentage we are expecting, over how many years. The last pay settlement was 2.95% for 2004 and the same in 2005.

Our only real option was a straw poll of our members where we have a Steward in that workplace, so a response can be returned to HQ by the end of September. At time of going to press all were not returned. More in the next newsletter.

CONTACTS PLEA - NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

The network of workplace contacts is slowly growing, however there are still a great number of workplaces that have no representation or contacts, especially Social Work. I can only ask again for members to help themselves and their fellow colleagues by offering to be a contact.

The workplace contact only has to aid with the distribution of local Branch literature as and when they receive it. There are NO meetings to attend apart from the AGM and you would not be asked to carry out any other UNISON duties unless you wished to become a Workplace Rep or Health & Safety Rep, etc. If you are willing to help then please complete the slip and send it to the Branch Office using the FREEPOST address.

I would like to be a Workplace Contact

Name: _____

Workplace Address: _____

Contact Phone No: _____

You can visit the branch website

www.unison-angus.org.uk