



**North
Somerset
UNISON
Annual Report
2020-21**

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The Global Pandemic!



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Well, at our last AGM, who would have predicted that we'd soon be facing an international Public Health crisis? It's hard to avoid clichés when talking about 2020 and words like unprecedented and catastrophic appear all too often in our communications. We have all found adapting to Covid-19 difficult, but, for many, the virus has brought tragedy and we offer our deepest sympathy to anyone in this position.

The government's response to the situation has proven to be wholly inadequate, resulting in one of the highest death rates in the world with over 100,000 UK deaths. Just to illustrate how bad this is; New Zealand, another island nation, has suffered just 25 deaths due to Covid.

However, in contrast to the national response, volunteers across the UK have rallied to help their neighbours and workers across the public sector have gone all out to support their communities.

UNISON's role in all of this has been to support our members throughout these difficult times. Our branch reps have supported hundreds of colleagues during the pandemic, often whilst facing challenges of their own. One of our reps summarised this below:

"We as Reps have still been supporting members, all be it in different ways. At times it's not been easy, especially at virtual meetings, and this has at times been a real challenge. But I think we have all adjusted well and risen to the challenge and have supported our members and will continue to do so"

Those of us in the virtual "branch office" have also been very busy providing individual support whenever a workplace rep has not been available and one-off advice and information whenever called-upon as well as advocating for members in all our regular and ad-hoc contacts and meetings with management.

Working during Covid has been incredibly difficult for many. Some people have had to adapt to working from home whilst looking after children or loved ones, supporting sick and/or vulnerable relatives, whilst others have had to be out and about throughout the crisis, facing real risks of infection. This situation has brought home to many people the importance of joining a union. Our branch welcomed over 300

new members in 2020. Since UNISON has waived its usual rule of not providing support for pre-existing issues for Covid concerns, we have been kept very busy!

We do hope that people realise that union membership makes sense for life – not just for pandemics! If you have friends and family members who are not in a union, please suggest to them the benefits of joining. The TUC has an online tool at www.findyourunion.tuc.org.uk/ which helps people identify which is the right union for them.

Hello and Goodbye!

Welcome to all our new members! Members should feel reassured to know that UNISON is there for them, at work, whenever needed. As above, we often support people through some of the most traumatic times in their working lives. However, it is also good to note that there are some happier benefits to joining



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Your union has negotiated deals with thousands of companies across the UK in order to offer discounts. Other members' benefits include a specialist travel agency, Croyde Bay Holiday resort and much more . Take a look at <https://benefits.unison.org.uk/>

Also, please don't forget **There for You**, UNISON's welfare fund and support line. Visit www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/ to find out more.

We are particularly pleased to welcome **Molly Cheek**, our new Young Members' Officer. Molly is keen to encourage young people to join and get involved in the union. If you are young (under 27) or know someone who is – please contact the branch to find out more!

We were sad that our long-standing Welfare Officer, **Julie Collins**, stood down from the role during 2020. Julie was also an experienced schools' Rep and we have often picked her brains for ways to support our members in education. Thanks for everything you did for the branch Julie, good luck in everything else that you do.

We also lost our new Environmental Officer, **Rob Bryer**, who moved on to an exciting sustainable travel job in Bristol. We had started to pull together some bright ideas for supporting the Green cause before Covid put most things on hold! Congratulations on your new job Rob, but we miss you!

Jean Long Rep of the Year, 2020

We are very pleased to congratulate **Pat McCulloch** for being our 2020 Rep of the Year!

Every year we honour the rep who others think has done the most for the union during the last year. We do this in memory of the much-missed Jean Long who was one of our most committed and long-standing reps.

This time, as with most things, the award ceremony was very different. Instead of a lunch followed by speeches in sunny June, the award was dropped off, just before Christmas, at the recipient's workplace* and the ceremony carried out over MS Teams!

(*otherwise known as Pat's home!).

Throughout her time as a rep and Branch Officer, Pat has worked tirelessly to support members and new reps. She has held the branch office together when others have been unavoidably absent, she argues passionately and knowledgeably for all members in order to make their case and, perhaps most importantly of all, she always makes us laugh!

Thank-you Pat for all your hard work – you are very much appreciated!



Pat was delighted with her award, she says:

“I would like to give my thanks to all that voted for me as Rep of the year, I feel it's an award that we all deserve.

But, I must say I was very pleased with my M&S voucher as I have now, after 25yrs of owning the same bath robe, treated myself to a new one, much to the pleasure of my other half who has been on to me for ages to give it for rags for his allotment!! I am now the proud owner of a new one!”

Keeping in touch

If you use social media, follow us on Facebook and Twitter: [@nsunison](#)

Our main way of contacting you is via email. In order for us to do this, you need to have ticked the box which allows us to contact you via email on My UNISON. You can do this and check all the details we hold on you at www.unison.org.uk/my-unison. It is important to check that your work place, job title and department (in personal details) are correct as this is how we will know whether to contact you if we are notified of workplace consultations.

If you haven't used My UNISON before, you will need to register. To do this, and to log in, you will need your membership number. If you don't have this, contact us and we will let you have it.

Caring for the Carers

Over 300 of our members work in the care sector, either in residential care homes or for community care providers. From them, we are aware of many examples of bad practice including lack of appropriate employment policies, inadequate sick pay, instances of bullying and poor practice around management of rotas. We are therefore pleased that UNISON, nationally, is calling for:

1. A **real living wage** for all care workers.
2. A **standard employment contract** for care work – including sick pay, contracted hours and pay for all hours on duty.
3. Significant, **emergency government funding**.
4. **Professional standards** – the Care Certificate to be upgraded and expanded, and professional registration standardised throughout the UK.
5. A **partnership working group** of commissioners, providers, government and trade unions to be established to identify and implement solutions

The branch is also working with the GMB to try to improve things locally. If you work in the care sector and want to find out more or want to tell us about your experiences, please get in touch.

Going Green in the Workplace

Although our new Environmental Officer left the area and a pandemic has caused chaos, we are still keen to do our bit to help the environment! If you are interested in becoming a Green Rep please get in touch.

Thinking about becoming a rep?

UNISON representatives work to support colleagues. This is interesting and rewarding work which gives you an opportunity to learn new skills, gain confidence and to find out more about your employer's structure and decision making processes.

You can carry out most of the work during work hours, depending upon your employer

UNISON offers reps comprehensive training and support and we promise not to overburden you with cases!

If you don't think you can become a rep, there are still other things you can do to support your union – you could become a workplace contact, set up a Self-Organised Group for like-minded colleagues or become a Green Rep.

For a nomination form or for a chat about this or any UNISON roles, contact unison@n-somerset.gov.uk tel 01934 634759

Louise Branch

UNISON North Somerset Branch Secretary

North Somerset Council Report

Supporting UNISON members

In 2020 our council UNISON representatives provided individual one-to-one support for over 30 UNISON members and provided advice and information to hundreds more. The most common issues raised with us were worries about Covid and the usual sickness absences and grievances.

Consultations:

UNISON supported members through 7 different consultations at the council. We provided support and advice to individual members through changes to their roles and collated collective responses from teams and advocated for them with management.

Liaison with council management

UNISON reps continued to speak up for our members in our regular meetings with management representatives, ie:

1. monthly Trade Union Liaison meetings, where we meet with HR and the other recognised unions (GMB and Unite)
2. quarterly Joint Safety and Consultative Committee meetings, where we meet with councillors, HR and Health and Safety management.
3. Individual liaison with HR, management and the Health and Safety team.

The formal meetings are a great opportunity for your reps to present issues directly to those who can change things. So, if you work for the council and have any concerns about employment practises or ideas for how things might be better, do get in touch! You are the person who knows best what affects you at work and we can only raise any issues if you tell us about them!

Covid 19

As with all workplaces, Covid 19 has affected the way that everyone at the council works. Priorities have had to change both at work and in people's lives. Many members are working very differently, and most have experienced significant changes to their working conditions. However, the council has been clear that rapid changes made due to the pandemic are temporary and, if it is later proposed to continue these temporary fixes, then full consultation will be carried out.

If you work for the council and you would like to find out more about how the council works and want to ensure that your voice is heard, you should think about becoming a UNISON rep! Contact us for a chat!

Weston Area Health Trust Report

This year has been full of change for staff at Weston General Hospital. Most staff became part of the newly merged Trust, University Hospital Bristol & Weston. Staff who were part of Children's Service at Drove Road were TUPE'd to Sirona / Avon & Wiltshire Partnership. We were expecting service level consultations to begin from 1st April as part of the merger plan. That was delayed because of the Covid pandemic. The effect of the pandemic were felt in full, particularly when the hospital was closed for a number of weeks following Covid outbreaks in both patients and staff. Sadly a member of staff passed away at the hospital with Covid. There was much national publicity and scrutiny of the hospital and an internal investigation into the Covid outbreak was released. Unfortunately as the 2nd spike occurred staff were becoming exhausted with the ongoing mental trauma of the pandemic. We are still finding our way with supporting members who are suffering from long Covid. With little clinical understanding of this process it brings lots of questions and there has been little guidance to support these staff from NHS England.

The consultations were launched after summer and have been a learning experience for all involved. As reps we have supported a number of members whose teams have been redesigned which has resulted in their roles changing. Members have been grateful for the support as we all know how difficult consultations can be to navigate. For us as reps we have been supported by other union colleagues which has been a real positive to join forces and work collectively across the Trust. Having a collaborative group means that we have a stronger voice when raising issues.

The consultations across the Trust are expected to last for another year but we expect the work for Unison will quieten down as the service changes will now we focused around the clinical services.

We have continued to support members outside of the consultation work via the more standard work, such as sickness, grievances as well as general queries and advice.

So another busy year for us!

Anthea Ward & Claire Davies

Alliance Homes Report

The quarterly joint meetings with HR – where we discuss business-wide issues – have continued throughout the year. We also regularly meet the heads of service to discuss operational issues in the various parts of the company.

Unsurprisingly, Covid-19 has loomed large in these discussions. Our representation at the company's regular health and safety meetings has been particularly important in this regard. It is fair to say that a great deal of flexibility has been shown on both sides and the aim of keeping our members safe has been achieved.

There have been several restructures where we have consulted and accompanied members in their individual meetings. As always seems to be the case, these have involved redundancies. Unfortunately, it would seem that this will be a feature of our work in the foreseeable future.

Bill Prescott, Jane Burt and Lee Donadel

January 2021

Agilisys Report

This year has been relatively quiet on the representation front with very few disciplinaries and grievances which is always a positive.

Agilisys has taken a proactive stance in response to the Covid situation. Advice was issued very quickly to all staff to ensure everyone received the same information. It was clear and unequivocal for both staff and managers whilst supportive of individual circumstances.

Agilisys already had a strong Mental Health focus and is acutely aware of the impact Covid has had on some staff members. As a result of the range of measures put in place to support staff with their Mental Health since March 2019, Agilisys won the category Mental Health in the Workplace at the South West Contact Centre Awards in November.

Agilisys IT staff pulled out all the stops to enable Agilisys and North Somerset staff to work from home, at very short notice and Agilisys has recruited staff throughout the year and specifically more recently to create a team to process blue badge applications for Kent County Council in North Somerset.

Agilisys as an organisation works across many areas. As a result, it is quite resilient and although providing admin and contact centre support for local authorities, its focus on doing this efficiently combined with its wider areas of interest mean it is less likely to suffer as much as local authorities during the forthcoming budget reviews.

Helen Jones

Liberata Report

2020 has been dominated by Covid, 95% of Liberata staff were sent to be home workers within 2 weeks of the 1st lockdown and have continued since then at a cost of over £1 million to Liberata. No employee was or is furloughed and those whose job couldn't be done due to Covid restrictions (such as visiting officers) have been redeployed to other roles temporarily.

Liberata locally has been central to providing business with key government support during all the various lockdowns and this continues.

Unison and Liberata negotiated a 2% salary uplift for all Liberata contract holders this year with the lowest paid getting a 5.9% increase, for the 3rd consecutive year Liberata have paid above the real living wage for Liberata contract holders. They also honoured the NJC pay award for TUPE staff retaining their NJC terms and conditions.

Liberata have signed up to UNISON's Violence at Work Charter and have committed to sign the TUC Dying to Work Charter.

There has been a number of consultations that has unfortunately resulted in a few redundancies at Liberata and the loss of the other rep at Liberata.

There has also been a TUPE of North Somerset based staff from Liberata to a London local authority, UNISON negotiated the staff's ability to take a local authority contract if they wished, increasing leave and salary and removing the need for staff to travel to London twice a month at their own cost and time.

Nick Caines

Sirona

No report received

Weston College Report

No report received

Case Worker Report

Pat, our brilliant case worker, has been as busy, as ever, supporting 56 members. Most of Pat's work has been mainly supporting people from home via Zoom, Teams and the old fashioned phone! Most of her recent work has been around Covid issues but she has also supported members through the usual issues including difficult processes such as redundancies and disciplinaries.

This work is particularly challenging with some of our smaller employers who may not have HR staff and who frequently have an "unusual" approach to employment policies and practices! Carrying out sensitive meetings via Zoom makes things even more difficult. However, Pat has certainly risen to the challenge and has continued to

provide robust advocacy and honest but sympathetic help for all those she has supported.

Pat Barrett UNISON Case Worker.

Retired Members Report

Due to the current pandemic the retired members have been unable to meet. The committee is looking for any retired members who would like to join the committee. If you or someone you know is interested in joining then please contact the branch office: unison@n-somerset.gov.uk

Unison Retired Members' Group

Treasurer's Report

The Branch started the year with balances of:

General Fund £39,754.60
Branch reserves £16,499.38

We ended the year with balances standing at:

General Fund £43,750.37
Branch Reserves £16,531.24

Due to the pandemic we have not been able to send people to conferences, Tolpuddle or training courses so the money that we would normally spend we have not been able to do so. The branch funding that we are receiving this year is 20% down from 26%, this is due to our having more in reserve than we would normally have as we have not been able to spend on the usual conferences and courses. We have spent £761.40 on recruitment supplies this year. An accountant will complete the end of year accounts in February.

**Consolidated Balance Sheet
for North Somerset**

For the year ended 31 December 2020

All Items	2020 (£)	2020 (£)	2019 (£)	2019 (£)
Fixed Assets				
Freehold Properties	0.00		0.00	
Leasehold Properties	0.00		0.00	
Equipment, Fixtures & Fittings	1.00		1.00	
Investments (Quoted & Unquoted)	0.00		0.00	
Total Fixed Assets		<u>1.00</u>		1.00
Current Assets				
Branch Funding	0.00		21.45	
Third Party Debtors	0.00		0.00	
Loans	0.00		0.00	
Building Society	0.00		0.00	
Bank Deposit	16,499.38		16,499.38	
Current Account	43,699.63		39,754.60	
Prepaid Card	0.00		0.00	
Cash	81.60		31.60	
Total Current Assets		<u>60,280.61</u>		56,307.03
Current Liabilities				
Branch Funding	0.00		0.00	
Third Party Creditors	0.00		590.81	
HO Loans	0.00		0.00	
Locally Collected Subscriptions	0.00		-4.00	
Credit Card	0.00		0.00	
Total Current Liabilities		<u>0.00</u>		586.81
Net Current Assets		<u>60,280.61</u>		55,720.22
Total Assets		<u>60,281.61</u>		55,721.22
Accumulated Funds				
Accumulated General Fund at year beginning	39,189.98		20,018.11	
Brought Forward Balance Adjustment	0.00		0.00	
Surplus/Deficit	4,560.39		19,171.87	
Accumulated General Fund at year end		<u>43,750.37</u>		39,189.98
Accumulated Industrial Action Fund	16,531.24		16,531.24	
Surplus/Deficit	0.00		0.00	
Accumulated Industrial Action Fund at year end		<u>16,531.24</u>		16,531.24
Accumulated Dedicated Fund	0.00		0.00	
Surplus/Deficit	0.00		0.00	
Accumulated Dedicated Fund at year end		<u>0.00</u>		0.00
Total Funds at End of the Year		<u>60,281.61</u>		55,721.22

**General Fund Income and Expenditure Account
for North Somerset**

For the year ended 31 December 2020

All Items	2020 (£)	2020 (£)	2019 (£)	2019 (£)
Income				
Branch Funding	41,499.63		57,274.04	
Branch Levy	0.00		0.00	
Investment Income Received	0.00		65.83	
Tax deducted or paid on Investment Income	0.00		0.00	
Retired Members Subscriptions	75.00		75.00	
Other Income	1,343.20		7,395.79	
Regional Pool Income	0.00		0.00	
Transfer from Industrial Action Fund	0.00		0.00	
Transfer from Dedicated Action Fund	0.00		0.00	
Locally collected subscriptions	0.00		0.00	
Income total		<u>42,917.83</u>		<u>64,810.66</u>
Expenditure				
Fighting Fund	0.00		0.00	
Staff Salaries	21,259.39		23,233.45	
Rent	6,000.00		6,000.00	
Rates	0.00		0.00	
Utilities	0.00		0.00	
Other administration	5,850.18		1,027.69	
Honoraria	0.00		0.00	
Conferences and group meetings	25.00		3,769.30	
Branch Committee	0.00		0.00	
Other Meetings	2,536.25		2,949.83	
Publicity	761.40		5,435.27	
Education	25.00		1,946.70	
Donations	75.00		100.00	
Affiliations	611.76		646.55	
Local Activities	0.00		530.00	
Transfer to Industrial Action Fund	0.00		0.00	
Transfer to Dedicated Fund(s)	0.00		0.00	
Other Expenditure	764.04		0.00	
Hardship Payments	0.00		0.00	
Other Branch Funding Deductions	0.00		0.00	
Tax	449.42		0.00	
Expenditure total		<u>38,357.44</u>		<u>45,638.79</u>
Surplus for the year		<u>4,560.39</u>		<u>19,171.87</u>

Branch Officer Vacancies

As a branch we have a number of branch officer vacancies on our committee that haven't been filled for a number of years meaning the few officers we do have are stretched covering these vacancies as well their own officer post and having a day job as well. Without branch officers your branch cannot function, some of the officer roles wouldn't take up much time to do at all. Other officer roles may attract facility time (meaning you have some time set aside from your employer to carry out the role). The officer roles listed below are unfilled, listed as well are what sort of things that role may include:

Assistant Branch Secretary:

To deputise for the Branch Secretary as and when required, you will need to be a trained rep for this role.

Vice Chair:

To deputise for the Branch Chair, to chair meetings, set agendas etc. you do not need to be a rep for this role.

Service Conditions Officer:

- To review proposed changes to members terms and conditions, restructures and advise branch officers and reps on potential issues, you will need to be a trained rep for this role.

Assistant Treasurer:

To assist Treasurer, you do not need to be a rep.

Equalities Officer:

Key tasks for the Equality Co-ordinator include:

- To be the central liaison point for equality in the branch and to distribute information on equality issues
- To co-ordinate and support the work of UNISON equality reps at branch level
- To liaise with and support their branch self-organised groups
- To promote an equality dimension in all the branch's work, including bargaining
- To advise branch officers and the branch committee on proportionality and fair representation, including in branch elections.
- To act as a mentor or buddy to new equality reps and to help them identify their training needs

Disabled Members Officer:

To campaign and organise around issues impacting disabled members locally, you do not need to be a rep to do this role but you do need to identify as having a disability under the Equality Act 2010

Women's Officer:

To campaign and organise around issues impacting Women members locally, you don't need to be a rep to do this role but you do need to identify as female.

Membership Officer:

- Mapping the branch's membership to identify membership density and steward coverage and monitor the branch's recruitment and retention rate
- Making sure the branch and union has accurate membership records
- Use membership system WARMS to update, manage and monitor membership data integrity
- Work with the branch committee and regional staff to develop and implement the branch's organisation and development plan
- Make recommendations to the branch committee on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets, etc.

International Officer:

- Co-ordinating the branch's work on international relations and making sure members are informed of national policy on international matters
- Receiving and distributing relevant information and encouraging members to be aware of the importance of international solidarity issues within the context of the overall work of the union
- Liaising where appropriate with central and regional international structures and reporting the views of the branch on international activities
- Liaising with other branch officers concerning publicity and education on international issues and liaise with the solidarity organisations and campaigns that UNISON is affiliated to
- Encourage members of the branch to take action and take part in international solidarity activities organised nationally or regionally developing an international perspective among members, stewards and branch officers.

Labour Link Officer:

- Explaining and developing the role of the UNISON Labour Link within the branch and ensuring that correct procedures are followed regarding the rights of Labour Link levy payers
- Acting as the central contact point for information on Labour Link matters from national and regional levels of the union, and from the Labour Party, and circulating it to Labour Link members in the branch, convening meetings of members as necessary
- Communicating with Labour Party members within the branch and

encouraging individual membership of the Labour Party

- Attending the UNISON branch committee and agreeing appropriate means of promoting UNISON policy in the Labour Party
- Organising elections for branch UNISON Labour Link representation within the regional Labour Link as necessary and making sure branch delegates report on their activities on behalf of members
- Liaising with the Labour Link regional political officer
- Promoting political education and policy discussions
- Strengthening links with Labour locally by getting the branch to affiliate to the local Labour Party and electing delegates to attend meeting
- Building campaigning work around key issues and co-ordinating campaigns with the Labour Party in council, Westminster, Scotland, Wales and European elections