



TIME FOR CHANGE

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Teachers affect eternity; no one can tell where their influence stops.

Henry Brooks Adams



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Introduction

Colleagues,

Welcome to *UTU Annual Conference 2024*.

It gives me great pleasure to present this report outlining the work of the Central Executive Committee and their representatives this year.

It has been a year like no other in UTU history. We have broken new ground in standing up for our profession. We have taken full days of strike action, we have stood on picket lines, we have walked in rallies and spoken at rallies and many of our number have represented our concerns in the media. We put our message firmly into the public arena, won public and political support and are close to resolution. I commend you all.

The efforts to deliver what we deserve have served to further consolidate and enhance our partnerships with our sister unions in NITC and beyond. The partnerships which you developed in the school context were replicated throughout negotiations and engagements in the industrial relations arena and the report, I trust, will give you a sense of the depth and breadth of the work that has been carried out this year. The backdrop of extreme difficulties both financially and politically has brought the union movement together and led to high levels of common purpose and solidarity which will stand us all in good stead as we face the next stage of restablisising our society.

This backdrop has seriously impacted on what would be the usual day-to-day workings of UTU as a member of NITC, and areas such as the progression of the Reviews and the regular Teachers' Negotiating Committee programme of work to review aspects of our Terms and Conditions of Service have been seriously impacted. The report reflects issues which have moved forward but also cites those which we would hope to progress further in the coming months as we emerge from the recent impasse.

Internally, the sub-committees of the UTU have continued to focus on responses to consultations and developments and to monitor the practical workings of

the union; members have also brought their expertise and experience to a range of working groups with management and external bodies and much of their work is reflected here. Sincere appreciation goes to those activists whose commitment makes a difference for members.

The funding constraints have taken their toll on members in schools and the Officials have devoted countless hours to providing the advice, guidance and support necessary to address and resolve the many issues which they have encountered. I believe the support our members receive when encountering difficult situations at work is second to none and I commend the UTU team for the comfort and outcomes they have delivered.

It has, indeed, been a very busy and, in many ways, very unique year, and there is no doubt that you, in the schools and classrooms, have been enduring what has felt like a period of sustained assault on our profession. We hope that you take comfort from this record of work and the evidence it provides that all in UTU, elected representatives, activists and staff, recognise the issues and continue to work towards resolution and improvement.

We deserve recognition as a profession, we deserve to be valued and appreciated, and we deserve to be given the space, time, trust and resources to do what we trained to do – to deliver our best for the children in our care.

UTU continues that battle for you. We appreciate and value your support.

J.E. White

Jacquie White
General Secretary

Work of the UTU

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY - Stephen McCord

Since April 2022 a major focus of the Ulster Teachers' Union has been that of fair pay for teachers. The campaign which started with Province wide meetings with the public, members and elected representatives was and then led to a successful ballot for Action Short of Strike and Strike Action. The strike action cumulated in a day of action with other ICTU colleagues on 18 January this year. The restoration of Stormont means that (as we go to press) there may be a glimmer of light for members to their long-awaited restoration of pay. I represent the UTU at industrial action subgroup meetings of NITC and will continue to work alongside the unions as we consider coming off action when the pay claim is resolved.

The work in the office includes advising and representing members. For some of our members this will include attending meetings with them or on their behalf, from informal matters to attendance and formal procedures which may be due to contractual issues regarding workplace terms and conditions, through to investigations and disciplinary hearings. Amidst these challenges, there have been notable victories for our members this year, including teaching allowance approvals (often backdated), extended working hours thanks to improved time-budgets or flexible variations in contract achieving a better balance between work and family life.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity this year to visit our members in their schools across all sectors, including nursery, primary, and post-primary. The dedication and resolve of our members in schools should be commended. Where there are challenges and issues members are, with the support of the union officials, willing to stand up and demand equality, fairness and positive changes.

Despite challenges posed by school closures and amalgamations due to considerations from area planning, we remain steadfast in supporting and advising our members through these tumultuous times. The impact of seeing our members and the staff of a school being told that their school is closing, or mergers remains one of the challenges as an

official. The heart and essence of a community can be destroyed or stopped over a zoom meeting with scant regard for the staff who together have often placed decades of dedication and loyalty to the school.

I've maintained close collaboration with our esteemed partners at Cornmarket Insurance, Membership Plus, and Platinum Financial Planning Ltd., whose support significantly benefits our members. I must thank the staff in all three organisations for continuing to support and provide services for our members.

I continue to sit on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council representing members at the bi-monthly meetings. I've deputized for General Secretary Jacquie White as necessary at meetings. I have proudly represented UTU at events like the May Day Parade in Belfast and also stood alongside our members on the picket lines and at rally events on days of industrial action.

The Joint Board (INTO, NEU, and UTU) allows us to serve and represent our members through collaborative training initiatives and conferences, including specialized courses and webinars. The "dealing with difficult conversations" course has been very popular with our principal members and the feedback has been excellent from the attendees.

Over the past year I have had the privilege of representing UTU at various conferences, including ASTI, IFUT, BIGTU (Secondary qualifications). A highlight this year was attending the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD Working Group (TUAC) on Education and Skills in Paris where presentations focused on Artificial Intelligence and the Green Economy.

I am supported in my role with all the UTU HQ team. The dedication and efficiency of our office staff have been instrumental in supporting both our members and myself throughout the year. We're fortunate to have Jacquie White's leadership guiding us through this challenging year, not only providing support and advocacy for our union members but also ensuring the well-being and care of the children under our members' supervision.





Work of the UTU

FIELD OFFICER REPORT - Rebekka Gilpin

This year has been yet another one without a functioning executive and the impact this has had on our education system has been very challenging on various levels – previous commitments in terms of reform, change and investment had to be halted, funding across the education sector was reduced severely, and, at time of writing, teachers have still not had the pay rise they deserve.

Ongoing and widespread industrial action across the public sector has culminated in a day of coordinated strike action in January, which has sent a very clear message to our local politicians and to the permanent secretary. This day was a show of strength and unity across the unions and workers and the voice of teachers has been at the forefront. The lack of investment in the education sector and the workforce has brought our members to the picket line in numbers not seen before and the support for industrial action has been and continues to be unprecedented.

As officials, a lot of our work has been focused on organising meetings and information sessions in relation to industrial action and strike action. At the same time, casework has been ongoing and we have supported our members with regard to managing sickness absences, disciplinary proceedings, grievances and bullying and harassment cases, to name a few. Alongside casework and providing general support for our members, I have also been involved in frequent meetings with the employing authorities, CYPS, NITC and ICTU. Our regular consultation meetings with CYPS have been of particular importance, given that the SEND Transformation Programme had to be changed as a result of a significant cut in the budget to deliver those far-reaching changes. TUS continue to express grave concerns regarding the timeline, implementation and consultation of the new SEND support system. This is reflected by our members across the EA Support Services, who are at the front line and are facing often significant changes to their working practices and the way they support some of the most vulnerable pupils in our system. I look forward to continue working alongside colleagues from UTU and other Unions and

stakeholders in achieving meaningful and positive change for our members and all teachers across Northern Ireland.

UTU's work with students has also continued, and we successfully delivered introduction sessions, as well as question and answer sessions with some of our Principals, to students at Queen's University, Stranmillis University College, Ulster University and St Mary's University College.

Our long-standing partnership with INTO and NEU has been of great benefit and we have expanded our training courses for members, including the addition of extra webinars delivered by Platinum Financial, who provide excellent financial advice to our members interested in pensions or general financial planning. Furthermore, the FIT Group continues to build momentum and is a great way for beginning teaching to become involved in the UTU and to liaise with colleagues from schools across Northern Ireland. I would like to thank the President, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary and all other Field Officers and staff for their continued work, support and advice. The support and the ability to work as a strong team has been invaluable, on a personal and a professional level. Together we continue to strive to provide the best support for our membership.

ORGANISING OFFICER REPORT - Joseph Wyglendacz

My thanks, before anything else, must go to my wonderful colleagues who have been incredibly supportive this year where we've been faced with such an increased workload and challenges. Specific praise to Jacquie White, who has been unwavering in her support and excellence as General Secretary. Thanks to the CEC for their forensic level of deliberation on some very challenging decisions to be made this year, their professionalism has allowed them to navigate trials that should not have come to pass.

Industrial Action has no doubt dominated workload to a significant degree, but it has also created a wonderful opportunity within my role as an Organising Officer. It has been my pleasure to represent the UTU at the numerous marches, rallies and pickets we've had this

year. Leading up to many of the strike dates it was also a privilege to drive across Northern Ireland, meeting members, to deliver strike materials (flag drop-offs etc.) and meet our wonderful activists. Through the guise of industrial action, we have taken advantage of the increased number of communication streams and engagement we've had with the wider membership. Building on the comprehensive programme of mapping and member engagement from last year, part of the organising strategy is to move towards a series of school and Branch-based rep engagements. This will be in addition to ongoing recruitment strategies. The intention, is to work with the reps we currently have to encourage an uptake in Rep training and focus on connecting locally, as a networking opportunity, for Branch development, organising and recruitment. Reps drop-in zooms have been initiated this year (a monthly meeting where reps have the facility to drop-in to a Zoom meeting and question an official on a raft of issues/concerns) and is a new channel of communication that we're offering, over other Unions. It shows that the UTU is committed to being a lay-led Union and believes in the grassroots involvement and contribution of their rep structure.

I have organised and attended all student recruitment events at the Initial Teacher Training institutions this year, with a significant number of students joining the three union partnership (UTU/ INTO/NEU). We have continued to build stronger links with Ulster University and Stranmillis and have organised events and activities within both institutions. The engagement with Stranmillis in particular had waned somewhat over the past few years (predominantly due to Covid), so it's a positive move back to a renewed relationship going forward. This year in particular, the UTU have sponsored fundraising events at Stranmillis and have co-run projects with the Students' Union. I have also spoken at Queens University to the whole cohort of PGCE students each March delivering a seminar on Contractual Terms and Time Budgets which has been a very well received session. I have also helped to orchestrate the FIT members and working alongside the chair having organised conferences and events with a range of CPD opportunities for our younger members.

The UTU's equality work strives to create a fair and just society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, or

other characteristics. By actively promoting and protecting equality, we uphold core democratic values such as fairness, justice, and human rights. Our attendance at Belfast Pride in July 2023 was a significant step in confirming our position on campaigning on all equality issues.

I have taken on considerable casework in the past year up to and including representation at Magistrates Court, with our partner Solicitors at SDM. This has been something I very much enjoy doing and continue to take on. Transitioning into the Northern Irish setting has been a real challenge as there are bizarre nuances which constantly surprise me, but it has to be said, the support and advice from Jacquie, Stephen and Rebekka has been paramount, especially to the successes we've had for our members.

The UTU have had a multitude of successes in the workplace following the collectivising/organisation of school groups. When teachers are organised they can far more successfully address concerns about their working conditions, workload, and safety measures. By having a unified voice, teachers can work towards creating an environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. We've helped many school groups collectivise together to achieve better working conditions, resources and support where needed.

Additionally, to my role as Organising Officer, I have also substituted for Jacquie on the NITPS Advisory Board, which is an incredibly useful piece of work as it both educated you significantly on the inner working of the NITPS but also helps you to build strong links to the key staff in the Teachers Pay and Pensions Team (which is a real advantage for when you need quick solutions to members' issues).

Within the wider Trade Union movement, I have represented the UTU at numerous meetings including (and not limited to): ICTU PR Campaigns Team, NIC-ICTU H&S Sub Committee, CLA meetings, NISTR Working Group, Equality Coalition, NIC-ICTU ETUG, NAHT(NI) Diversity and Equality Leadership Conference and many more. This has provided me with an amazing opportunity to network with other Trade Union groups and develop key relationships.

In conclusion of my report I wish to, once again, thank everyone for their help and support in my role at the UTU. I look forward to meeting many more of the membership and new faces (to me) at Annual Conference 2024.



Northern Ireland Teachers' Council

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) is the Teachers' Side of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) in Northern Ireland. It comprises the five recognised teachers' unions – INTO, NAHT, NASUWT, NEU, UTU – who work together to represent the views and concerns of all teachers and school leaders in negotiations with Management Side regarding current issues in education.

The Constitution of the NITC allows a maximum of 5 representatives for every 1000 members or part of 1000 members. UTU qualifies for 5 seats, as do INTO and NASUWT, with NEU holding 2 seats and NAHT 1 with an agreed additional seat for an Observer. NITC aims to work on a consensus basis but, where a vote is taken, there must be four out of the five unions voting in favour.

The NITC Officers were re-elected in September 2023 and are:

- Chair: Jackie White (UTU)
- Vice-Chair: Justin McCamphill (NASUWT)
- Honorary Secretary: Mark McTaggart (INTO)
- Minutes Secretary: Mark Langhammer/Pauline Buchanan (NEU)
- Honorary Treasurer: Graham Gault (NAHT)

UTU was represented on the NITC during the year by the President, Lynelle Fenton, the Vice-President, Leigh McKay, the Ex-President, Louise Creelman, the General Secretary, Jackie White and the Deputy General Secretary, Stephen McCord.

The full NITC meets every other month from September onwards with NITC Interests (2 per union) meeting at least once in between.

Following Annual Conference 2023, full meetings of NITC resumed on 15th May with the following issues being discussed.

PAY AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION

This has been an unprecedented year with regards to pay and industrial action.

On the negative side, we have not been in a situation before where no feasible offer regarding pay has been on the table for a period of three years; this is not to suggest in any way that the years of pay freeze were feasible but merely that we had no negotiating options at that time.

We had one offer in the aftermath of the pandemic which would have treated different categories of teachers in a different manner, but following the solidarity established during those difficult times, you, the members, moved to reject.

On the positive side, we have never before managed to establish the high levels of working together that we have seen from the unions within NITC this year, and our thanks and appreciation go to the leaders of INTO, NASUWT, NAHT and NEU for the incredible work which has gone on behind the scenes to keep us all together.

The fact that UTU and NAHT were taking strike action for the first time, and that all five unions were completely coordinated both in terms of strike and action short of strike, served to magnify the message to the employers, the politicians and the general public that the limits had been reached and we ended up with support from all quarters.

The on-going action formed a key part of all NITC engagement this year, with strategies being discussed and plans made as a standing item on the agenda. An industrial action sub-group was formed which fed into the main body and addressed any issues which arose on a regular basis.

NITC also coordinated messaging to members, informing employers and press conferences/releases which ensured

that no member of the teaching profession was left unrepresented. We also engaged with politicians as one

body to reinforce the fact that the issue of pay – and funding – was impacting on every teacher.

NITC held a lobbying exercise at Stormont on 9th October where over the course of the day we met with all five political parties and discussed priorities and concerns.

Since the reestablishment of the Assembly we have met with Minister Givan and presented evidence to the Education Committee.

NITC continued to address a range of other issues, some of which had been impacted by the industrial action, others not. The following are a range of the areas addressed.

ETI

The issues around ETI have long been a source of contention, and UTU and others had been involved in industrial action in that area long before the current stage due to the breakdown in relationships and the huge increase in stress and workload which arose from the regime of the previous Chief Inspector.

Under the new Chief Inspector there has been on-going and regular engagement between NITC and ETI looking at new inspection formats, reducing paperwork and the research projects around Outdoor Play, PE, etc. The work has been positive but is, as yet, untested due to the current impasse. However, ETI has made itself available to speak to Early Career teachers, School Leaders and in other fora to disseminate information, gauge opinion and offer reassurance that change is anticipated.

There have been a few issues discussed and addressed by NITC outside of this engagement.

Northern Ireland Teachers' Council

Concerns were raised about action in schools during formal intervention follow up activity and safeguarding. There were concerns that there was a 'mismatch' between what ETI were discussing with the NITC subgroup and what members were experiencing at school level. Further concerns were raised in light of a suggestion that ETI would visit schools without notice in following up safeguarding elements of formal intervention follow up inspections.

These concerns were raised with ETI and addressed.

Further information on the way forward is available under External Bodies.

FUNDING OF SERVICES

The impact of cuts to services has been keenly felt this year and the following is a flavour of discussions in this area.

- An issue arose concerning assessments/adjustments which could be made for members with disabilities as a result of cuts to the Access to Work funding. NITC noted that there was no clarity, and in light of these budget concerns sought a meeting with EA to discuss. The issue was subsequently tabled for the EA-NITC Forum.

- In regard to the correspondence received from Clare McClelland, DE Raising Aspirations and Empowering Improvement, of 3 May 2023 on 'Safeguarding, Vulnerable Children and Action Short of Strike', NITC sought a full workload impact assessment to inform any NITC response to the review. DE was advised that this would include an assessment of what roles/duties were previously conducted by social workers, and how much of that work is now being imposed on teachers. NITC asked that each NITC Interest would advise members to continue with the system 'as is' until the WIA is carried out.

- A range of concerns were raised in regard to resourcing LSCs, notably the new LSCs in schools. It was noted that 'allocation' was largely treated as a compliance issue by EA to allow responses to issue to NICCY, rather than an assurance of appropriateness of

placement. There was concern that the new units were being set-up in an 'ad-hoc' way and NITC agreed to request a specific list of where all new units were located and to set out the breadth of NITC concerns.

- An issue was raised regarding a letter from DE to school principals about referrals to Behaviour Support. NITC was concerned at the impact that this would have on SENCO members in terms of resources and teacher workload.

MEETINGS WITH OTHER PARTIES

NITC often seek the input, or receive briefings from, other parties according to the issues arising. These are ad hoc meetings outside of the usual schedule of engagement; the following reflect some of the areas under consideration.

- Karen McCulloch of DE: the structure and work of her division, the Education Policy and Children's Services Group.
- EA: Extended Schools Programme cuts
- EAVTUS meeting – 19th May – Update on SEN placements
- Join Trade Union update of EA HR Reviews;
- EAVTUS meeting – Establishment of Additional SEN provisions – Advice and support for schools
- DE re RSE DE: Education Policy and Children's Services Briefing
- Meeting re reconstitution of Boards of Governors
- Restrictive Practices guidance and Children Looked After
- Equality Commission NI in relation to the out-workings of the removal of the FETO (Fair Employment and Treatment Order).
- GTCNI regarding the potential reestablishment of the body, and to address concerns around qualified teacher registration.

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF TEACHERS

Teacher Health and Safety is also of great importance and issues were discussed such as:

- 'EA Accident Reporting': Whilst acknowledging the potential additional inputting work for school leaders, NITC agreed to encourage all staff to use the online facility to report incidents and

'near misses' to ensure that the level of incidents is properly recorded and actioned. This was subsequently followed up with a request to Management Side to support.

- Information had been provided from TNC Management Side on request to the effect that survey work was underway to assess the degree to which the RAAC issue affects the school and education estate.

CONSULTATIONS

A number of consultations come to the members of NITC for response. These are discussed and unions respond individually with an additional joint response being compiled if deemed appropriate. The following are some of the consultations from this year.

- RSE Consultation.
- Consultation on restraint and seclusion
- Consultation in relation to Management Structures within Special Schools.

Teachers' Negotiating Committee

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service in Northern Ireland are determined by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee [TNC] which comprises two parties - Management Side and Teachers' Side.

Management Side consists of the Education Authority, CCMS, NICIE, Governing Bodies Association (GBA), Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and the Department of Education (DE).

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) is the Teachers' Side of the TNC. NITC consists of the five recognised teachers' unions, UTU, INTO, NEU, NAHT, and NASUWT. Each NITC union has two representatives on the Teachers' Side of the TNC.

The Chair of TNC rotates between Trade Union Side and Management Side and the Teachers' Negotiating Committee has been chaired this year by Sara Long, Chief Executive of EA.

The TNC is scheduled to meet quarterly but, at time of writing, last met in June 2022.

The General Secretary, Jacquie White, and the President, Lynelle Fenton, represented UTU on the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) this year.

The full TNC met on 26th June 2023 and the following business was conducted.

The NITC Pay Claim for the previous three years was tabled with Management Side and the reports from the Workforce Reviews were passed to TNC for implementation.

The issue of paying part-time teachers additional hours was addressed and there was an update on Nursery Principals.

Progress on the Programme Work 2020-21 was reported as follows:

Updates were given in relation to the work on Flexible Working and the Attendance Procedure;

TNC Circulars for the following were ratified.

- TNC 2023/1 Teachers' Equal Opportunities Policy
- TNC 2023/2 Joint Declaration of Protection
- TNC 2023/3 Teachers' Adoption Leave Scheme
- TNC 2020-2 – Review of Effectiveness

TNC PAY SUB-GROUP

The Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) is also the forum for the negotiation of teachers' pay.

NITC representatives have continued to engage with representatives from Management Side through the TNC Pay Sub-Group.

This engagement has been regular throughout the year even though no funding was available.

Since the return of the Assembly and the release of funding for Public Sector Pay, negotiation proper has commenced and meetings have become more frequent, intense and meaningful.

At time of writing, the TNC Pay Sub-Group is close to a proposal on pay.

Outcomes from the negotiations will be put to the members as a priority.

TNC REVIEWS SUB-GROUP

Meetings of the sub-group relating to the implementation of the Review recommendations have also taken place, again in the absence of resource.

A framework for implementation is currently under consideration.

The constitution of TNC was reviewed in 2019 with the new constitution outlined in Circular TNC 2020/2. As a result of the review the Joint Secretaries' Forum was established which comprises three representatives from Teachers' Side and three representatives from Management Side. This group convenes between the meetings of the full TNC and work is carried out relating to Teachers' Terms and Conditions. When agreement is reached the revisions to the policies will be ratified at TNC and the revised Circulars will be available for schools as part of teachers' terms and conditions of employment.

Outside of the Programme of Work, other issues as they emerge are brought by NITC to JSF.

Working groups comprising representatives of both teachers' side and employers' side are set up as necessary to feed into a range of areas contained within the work programme.

The General Secretary, Jacquie White, represents UTU and NITC on the Joint Secretaries' Forum.

JSF meets monthly. The following issues were under consideration this year.

- The impact and out-workings of changes to the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO).
- Travel and Subsistence rates for teachers.
- The timing and implementation of the Reorganisation Agreement which pertains to those teachers involved in school closures.
- Part Time Teachers and appropriate payment for Additional Hours.
- The roll out of EA One.

JSF PROGRAMME OF WORK

The JSF agrees a programme of work on behalf of NITC and MS and reviews the identified policies and procedures accordingly.

Teachers' Negotiating Committee

Additional personnel from both sides take part in the working groups with progress monitored.

The Programme of Work for 2020-21 listed the following to be reviewed:

- Joint Declaration of Protection
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Attendance Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy

The first two items have been addressed but, even though we are now in 2024, the third and fourth, whilst near completion, have failed to reach ratification level.

This is resulting in a refusal to move other items on to the programme.

NITC has serious concerns which are being voiced.

EA PROGRAMME OF WORK

Whilst there is some very good and useful work being carried out by EA relating, currently, to aspects of teachers' health and safety, there is an on-going concern that, at its conclusion, it will apply only to teachers in the Controlled sector.

Examples include:

- EA Menopause Policy
- Work on Preventing Violence against Teachers which addresses assaults and social media abuse. The concern with this work is how, and if, it relates to the TNC 2011/2 Policy Statement on

Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour Against Teachers.

JSF is seeking to establish the mechanisms by which this work will apply to all teachers.

REVIEW OF TNC

Work is planned to ascertain whether changes should be made to the negotiating structures to make them more efficient and effective.

Reports from CEC Sub-Committees

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES - Louise Creelman, **Convenor**

Finance and General Purposes sub committee have met 5 times in the last year. These meetings were in May, June, September, December and February.

The sub-committee discussed in May conference 2023 and its costings – first time at Roe Park Resort. Started to plan and think about Conference 2024 and prices.

At each meeting they have discussed: update on FIT – the budget and plans for events going forward, keeping track of the UTU overall budget, pricing and updating our IT providers, merchandise for going into schools and confirming the yearly budget.

CONFERENCE - Louise Creelman, **Convenor**

Conference sub committee have met 5 times in the last year. These meetings were in May, June, September, December and February.

The sub-committee discussed in May feedback from conference 2023 – first time at Roe Park Resort. At each meeting they have discussed and planned for Conference 2024. Areas specifically looked at were: themes, backdrops, merchandise, handbook and report, sponsors and exhibitors, panel and speakers, guests, the agenda and timings. In the last few meetings resolutions have been discussed.

EDUCATION AND POLICY - Stephen McCord, **Convenor**

The Education and Policy Sub-Committee is comprised of members from CEC and elected members from each of the five Area Associations. The members of the committee represent a wide variety of settings, sectors, and Key Stages. Due to the impasse at Stormont, this was a quiet year for the committee. The committee did meet to discuss the UTU response on the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Consultation. A response to the Consultation on A Strategy for Integrated Education in Northern Ireland was also submitted. The long-awaited Independent Review of Education, "Investing in a Better Future" was published in December. This document has already been circulated with members of the sub-committee and we will be ready to respond when recommendations are made by a new Education Minister. The sub-committee are also examining the Disability Programme of work and will be exploring this in the incoming year.

I wish to place on record my thanks to those members on this sub-committee for their commitment, time, and input over the past year.

ICT SUB-COMMITTEE - Stephen McCord, **Convenor**

The ICT committee convened at regular times over the past year and continues to examine the various aspects of ICT at Headquarters. It is imperative that we establish professional, dependable, highly efficient, and effective but secure methods to communicate with our members. Our discussions examine hardware, software, internet provision, website management, as well as the diverse communication methods we use to engage with our members. We employ social media (Facebook, X

formerly Twitter, Instagram, Threads, LinkTree and YouTube), the website, SMS, bulk email, and personal email for communication. TITO bookings has been a recent addition and is being used to register members for webinars and events.

The ongoing hardware replacement and refreshment follow a cyclical pattern. We continue to explore and are considering incorporating new technologies in the Board room to facilitate data and information sharing during meetings. We have also incorporated MS 365 for the staff at HQ. We will be using dedicated emails for our incoming CEC members and our Secretaries and Chairs of Branch and Area Associations for the coming year.

Utilizing social media as a communication tool remains a consistent strategy. The database now contains almost 99.8% of all members' email addresses and contact numbers. Special appreciation is extended to Tony for his graphical contributions, and gratitude is expressed to Meriel and Denise for their dedication to keeping our database up-to-date. Acknowledgments are also extended to the subcommittee members for their valuable advice and guidance throughout the past year.

ORGANISATION AND MEMBERSHIP - Rebekka Gilpin, **Convenor**

The Organisation and Membership sub-committee has met once since Conference 2023 to discuss membership related matters and to plan ahead for the new year. During the meeting in February, which was attended by CEC members and the UTU Officers, suggestions in relation to a revised Refer a Friends scheme were discussed, as well as the potential to review subscription rates. Members present also proposed to liaise with branch secretaries in order to build on the current branch meetings to provide further CPD and networking opportunities for members.

As in every year, the FIT group has played a major role in reaching out to our members at the beginning of their career. Details of this year's conference, as well as other engagement sessions, will be finalised in due course.

A further meeting will be scheduled for April, during which the committee will assess numbers and figures and agree on the suggested proposals.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY – Lynelle Fenton, **Convenor**

The International Relations and Global Solidarity Sub-Committee raises awareness of education both at home and around the world. This sub-committee organises two competitions each year and children from all sectors are encouraged to enter. This year these competitions were titled, "What I like about my school" and "Design a Christmas card." We were delighted to receive many entries from a wide range of schools and it was an extremely difficult task for our judging panel to arrive at a decision on the winners. Winning entries were received from Dromara PS, Harryville PS, Enniskillen Model PS, Spires Integrated PS, Aughnacloy PS, Aughter PS, Carrowdore PS, Annalong PS, Jones Memorial PS, Drumrane PS, Hart Memorial PS, Edenderry PS, Denamona PS, Portadown Integrated PS, Academy PS, Currie PS, Beechlaw School and Riverside School. The President visited many of these schools and presented prizes to the winners. We are always very grateful to teachers for encouraging their children to enter these competitions.

Reports from CEC Sub-Committees

The charities we supported this year were; UNESCO A Ray of Hope, Presbyterian Church for the work of Diane Cusick, Jengana, City of Sanctuary Belfast, Woman's Aid, World Vision, NI Children's Hospice, The Steve Sinnott Foundation, Air Ambulance NI, Water Aid UK, Hope 365 Ethiopia, Hope for Youth Ministries, NI Kidney Research Fund, Free Presbyterian Church for the work of Christina Logan.

We trust that these charitable donations made by UTU will benefit children throughout the world.

PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE – Lynelle Fenton, **Convenor**

The Property Sub-Committee meets as necessary to ensure the continued upkeep of our Headquarters building, interior fixtures and fittings and the surrounding grounds. As a union we are privileged to have such a prestigious building located in the suburbs of Belfast.

In addition to the ongoing general maintenance activities, some replacement lighting has been completed.

A three-year lease with the tenant, Thornton Tomasetti Warrington Ltd, has been agreed and signed by both the tenant and the trustees. We express our sincere thanks to Mervin McClean who expended significant time and effort to ensure that this lease was appropriate for the needs of both parties.

After many decades of faithful service, Mervin has recently resigned from the property sub-committee. On behalf of UTU, I would like to thank Mervin for his commitment, dedication and guidance in relation to the preservation of our historic building.

EDITORIAL PANEL UTU NEWS SUB-COMMITTEE – Lynelle Fenton, **Convenor**

A copy of the UTU news was e-mailed to all members in June 2023 and Dec 2023. A hard copy of the June edition was also sent to each school.

Members were encouraged to submit photographs and articles for inclusion in these publications. We are particularly grateful to the various businesses who helped fund these publications with their advertisements.

The quality of graphical presentation of these publications is testimony to the expertise and commitment of Tony McCabe, who quietly compiles and publishes these magazines.

HEALTH AND SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE – Lynelle Fenton, **Convenor**

In conjunction with Pauline Hurst (UTU disability champion), UTU is focusing on raising the awareness of disability and empowering members to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made in their schools. The health and safety sub-committee has developed a survey to quantify the extent of

disability amongst UTU members and identify some of the challenges faced by members. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pauline for her invaluable guidance in this sensitive area.

Members should have now received the survey to ascertain the extent of disability amongst UTU members. I would encourage members to respond as honestly as they feel possible.

Law and Tenure

UTU Officials have once again been kept very busy with case work in the past year. Cases are reported to the Central Executive Committee on a monthly basis with emergency meetings being called remotely if particular decisions are required as a matter of priority.

Being mindful of confidentiality and GDPR issues, individual cases will not be reported here but, rather, an indication and exploration of particular themes within case work this year.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The five member unions of NITC worked closely this year to align industrial action and assist teachers and school leaders in individual schools to move forward together.

Despite this, Officials dealt with a significant number of cases where members were pressurised to breach action, act in opposition to the action or identify themselves and provide information outside of the legal processes clearly set out by both the unions and the employers.

UTU commends members who stood against this subversive behaviour and followed the course of action which they knew to be in the best interests of their colleagues, and ultimately the children, under often difficult circumstances.

GOVERNANCE

UTU members are experiencing a growing number of issues in relation to school governance.

It is accepted and appreciated that Governors carry out their roles on a voluntary basis and the majority wish to serve in the interests of the local community. However, the position is that of employer and the responsibilities which accompany this must be observed.

Governors following through on addressing issues and complaints in the absence of, or in contravention of, advice from the employing authorities has caused unnecessary stress and anxiety to what are already difficult situations. Disregard of reasonable timeframes is also an issue as, again, a long term lack of resolution is difficult to cope with.

Another key – and growing – area of concern is the lack of any specific procedure to address unacceptable behaviour from an individual governor to a member of teaching staff.

The lack of accountability of governors as employers is a matter of great concern and an issue which we are seeking to resolve.

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES IN SCHOOL

Relationship issues in schools do not, of course, only relate to governors but can arise between teachers and school leaders, teachers and teachers, or teachers and support staff.

Numerous allegations around unacceptable behaviour have been put forward this year and they have served to bring to the fore the fact that the policy which has normally been used to address these issues - TNC 2009/11 - is no longer fit for purpose. Work has commenced with the employers to put in place interim contingency measures with a view to revisiting the procedure as part of the programme of work.

Such issues can range from a breakdown between two members of staff to cases where an entire teaching staff raises concerns regarding bullying on the part of management. Cases must be raised individually so this is leading to multiple cases in a single school. Unfortunately, situations of this nature are on the increase and UTU is seeking a robust process from EA to address governance/management behaviour in these settings.

ATTACKS ON STAFF FROM PUPILS AND PARENTS

There has been a significant rise in members requesting support following being attacked by pupils and/or being on the receiving end of abusive behaviour from parents. There appears to be a distinct lack of understanding, support or appropriate action from some schools even though clear guidance and policy is available.

UTU is working on ensuring that such incidents are recorded in line with those in place for support staff. This will lead to collection of data which can be reported back to TNC and used as a basis for the argument of need for greater support. This should have been happening since 2014 but is not in place.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

Officials have attended many meetings this year to support members on, or returning from, long-term sickness absence. Some cases relate to long-Covid complications but the vast majority have been caused by work-related stress.

UTU has also supported members through the Termination of Contract process due to life-changing illness.

DISABILITY

Members with disabilities are now feeling confident enough to come forward and seek support, and Officials have been instrumental in helping them to access reasonable adjustments in the form of working practice, specialist equipment and expert input.

The UTU programme of work on Disability is enabling us to understand more fully how to navigate the system to ensure that teachers facing issues get access to what they require and those who are stepping forward now are paving the way for those coming afterwards.

Law and Tenure

SALARIES AND CONTRACT ISSUES

Schools have been under increasing pressures with regard to budgets but this is not a justification for denying teachers their rights to salary and contractual entitlements.

Officials have dealt with members who have not progressed on the salary scale, some for a number of years; some have been advised that the school cannot afford the increase.

Concerns have also been raised about the lack of governor review of Teaching Allowances and Officials have successfully challenged salary policy where teachers are not being appropriately rewarded for work done.

This year also presented issues with part-time teachers being paid additional hours rather than a full day's pay, an issue which was taken to management side and resolved at least for situations going forward.

Directed Time Budgets, whilst now in place in most schools, are still an issue for some.

The UTU, alongside colleagues in NITC, remains concerned with regard to the different terms and conditions under which our members in the EA Support Services are employed. UTU has also asked CYPs to investigate how and under what contracts new posts are being advertised. Furthermore, the UTU continues to represent our members' views and concerns in light of the SEND Transformation Programme and any potential impact this might have on terms and conditions.

LEGAL CASES

UTU benefits from a long-standing relationship with the solicitors of Shean-Dickson-Merrick

Due to the fact that allegations of a child protection nature by teachers reach the bar of being 'in the public interest, Officials have attended a number of PSNI interviews under caution with members this year.

Many of these cases progress no further in a legal sense but are returned to the school for internal investigation.

Some cases proceed further with settlements being made before hearing.

However, one case this year was heard at a Magistrates Court surrounding an allegation of common assault by our member to a child.

Thanks goes on behalf of members to the UTU Officials who are exemplary in their determination to seek fair and appropriate outcomes for every individual requiring support.

Teacher Unity

UTU continues to benefit from engagement with other teaching unions, both across the islands and further afield, through a range of activities, workshops and conferences.

These engagements allow us to ascertain and learn from the high levels of similarity in the issues faced by teachers, regardless of jurisdiction, whilst others provide opportunities to work together on practical campaigns and issues. Perhaps a key learning point from this year in particular has been the resolution of pay and salary issues in other jurisdictions, the information from which we have been able to bring to bear in our own efforts to address.

Meetings and conferences have in the main reverted to physical gatherings again and, with the pandemic still sharp in the memory, the opportunity to meet face-to-face continued to be valued by many.

TEACHING UNION CONFERENCES

The Annual Conferences of sister teaching unions throughout the various jurisdictions were attended by the President, Vice-President, Ex-President, General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary as appropriate.

UTU was invited – and warmly welcomed by – the following teaching unions.

INTO: Irish National Teachers' Organisation (NI and All Ireland)

NASUWT: National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (Northern Ireland and National)

NEU: National Education Union (National Conference and NI events)

EIS: Education Institute of Scotland

SSTA: Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

TUI: Teachers' Union of Ireland

IFUT: Irish Federation of University Teachers

ASTI: Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

NAHT: National Association of Head Teachers

JOINT INTO, NEU AND UTU BOARD

The Ulster Teachers' Union, Irish National Teachers' Organisation and National Education Union continue to forge strong links and work together for members. The UTU is represented on the Joint Board by the President, Vice-President, Ex-President, General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary. The Joint Board meets on a bi-monthly basis. Much of the work this year has centred on the development and coordination of industrial action.

The Joint Board also organised two Joint Leadership seminars. The first in November was hosted as a webinar. It included updates on the Pay Dispute & Industrial Action, EA One Feedback on the Timecards and New Initiatives and SEN Issues. In January a face-to-face seminar was held in Dungannon. The school leaders were updated on the pay dispute, ETI, EA ONE, managing stress in the workplace and workload and job intensity. Further leadership events are planned for next term.

Student Recruitment continued to take place jointly with events being held in Ulster University, Coleraine, Queen's University, Belfast and Stranmillis and St Mary's Teacher Training Colleges.

There is also a raft of training events organised by the three unions in partnership and we have now started to use a Joint INTO, NEU and UTU YouTube channel.

BRITISH AND IRISH GROUP OF TEACHING UNIONS (BIGTU)

A meeting of the General Secretaries of the Teacher Unions in the UK and Ireland usually takes place once a year to discuss issues which affect teachers throughout the two islands. It is normally the case that a further agenda is planned for a meeting of the wider group which includes the Presidents of the unions in addition to the General Secretaries.

The unions involved are:

- Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI)
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
- Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT)
- Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)

- National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
- National Education Union (NEU)
- Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)
- Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
- Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU)
- University and College Union (UCU)

The General Secretaries keep in regular contact throughout the year by telephone/email/zoom as required and also meet up at teaching union, European and international conferences. The group is currently chaired by Larry Flanagan, previous General Secretary of EIS and current President of ETUCE.

The BIGTU group of General Secretaries and Presidents met on 26 June 2023 at the NEU Office in London and the General Secretaries reconvened in the UTU Offices in November.

Items discussed included:

- Reports on the latest work of Education International/ETUCE TUAC (reported below)
- The future of examinations
- Teachers' pay 2023 across the jurisdictions

TUAC (TRADE UNION ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE OECD)

The first meeting of the TUAC Working Group on Education and Skills took place in Paris, OECD Conference Centre, on 4th and 5th May 2023.

UTU was represented by the General Secretary, Jacquie White, and the President, Lynelle Fenton. Larry Flanagan, Chair of the TUAC Working Group on Education and Skills, presided over the two-day event.

The following outlines the areas for discussion on the agenda and a flavour of the contributions made.

Further information and related papers are available from the General Secretary on request.

Teacher Unity

Resourcing education for the digital age

Andreea Minea-Pic, Analyst with the Policy Advice and Implementation Division of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, presented an overview of a new project entitled “Resourcing School Education for the Digital Age: Effective and Future-Ready Teachers.”

Working Group members emphasised the need to meaningfully engage with and listen to teachers in assessing how they can best be supported and equipped in the digital transformation, emphasising the important role played by trade unions in this regard. Members also stressed the issue of work intensification as one of the factors contributing to the unattractiveness of the teaching profession and the implications digitalisation will have in terms of the demands placed on teachers’ time.

Update from the OECD Director for Education and Skills

Andreas Schleicher gave an update on recent and forthcoming work and meetings of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. This included an overview of the OECD Education and Skills Ministerial meeting held in December 2022, the main outcome of which was the Declaration on Building Equitable Societies Through Education, to which TUAC provided input during the drafting process and which calls for the design and implementation of policies to foster equity and quality in education and skills. To support countries in this regard, the OECD has developed an Interactive Dashboard of Indicators on Equity in and through Education, due to be launched in June 2023.

Members emphasised the importance of practical engagement and interactions with teachers and classroom assistants in supporting and preparing young learners for digitalisation. Members also expressed support for the Directorate’s focus on equity issues and gender gaps in education and on the role of education in the context of climate change. The need for regulation regarding AI was also highlighted.

Stakeholder engagement in education and skills policy

Laura Reznikova, Analyst in the OECD’s Centre for Skills, presented an overview of a current project that explores strategies for effectively engaging stakeholders in education and skills policy in different contexts and that seeks to generate insights into how stakeholder engagement mechanisms can lead to better skills outcomes.

Transformative teaching for global engagement, sustainability and digital access: discussion on the 2023 International Summit on the Teaching Profession

This session provided an opportunity for members to discuss the key issues and questions explored during the International Summit on the Teaching Profession.

There was substantial discussion on the increasing presence of AI and on the role of trade unions in shaping how digital technologies are designed and used in education. Members emphasised that the focus of discussions in this area should be on how AI and digital technologies generally can be used as a tool to support learning and teaching (as opposed to framing digitalisation in education as an end goal in and of itself). Members also raised the lack of knowledge on the part of unions as a key challenge in this area, emphasising the need for increased understanding of how AI works in order for unions to be able to effectively contribute to shaping its deployment in education.

The future of Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Marieke Vandeweyer, Senior Policy Analyst with the VET and Adult Learning team, provided an overview of the “VET Facing the Future” project, which explores how VET systems can be re-engineered to better align training with skill needs, to make VET more accessible, to better support transitions into a changing labour market and future learning, and to incorporate innovative and pedagogical approaches. Issues raised by members in the discussion that followed included barriers to access faced in specific countries (in terms of cost and geographical location of training), funding,

and pathways facilitating transitions between higher education and VET. Members also emphasised that the devaluation, or the negative framing, of VET is a significant issue faced across countries, with VET being perceived as a second-choice pathway for learners. The question of incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises to provide apprenticeships was also discussed.

The Schools+ Network

Anna Pons, Analyst and Project Lead with the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, provided an overview of the Schools+ Network. As part of the OECD’s Global Teaching Insights project, the Network seeks to connect those working in and closely with schools to share school-level innovations and build evidence towards achieving quality education, equity and well-being in the context of a rapidly changing world.

The assessment of skills needs for the green transition
Michele Tuccio, Economist with the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, presented findings from a recent project mapping initiatives and methods used in selected countries to anticipate skills needs for the green transition.

Working Group members noted the importance of this topic in the current context, and expressed agreement with the focus being on the skills that will be needed in the context of the green transition rather than job-specific skills. A key issue that was raised was how employers can be incentivised and supported to invest in training, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises.

Human resources in higher education

Simon Roy, Senior Policy Analyst with the Higher Education Policy and Benchmarking team, presented key findings from a recent evidence review on academic career policies, which covered issues such as contractual status, responsibilities and workloads, staff appraisal and rewards mechanisms, diversity and gender balance, and the protection of academic freedom.

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Pedagogical tools for a competency-based curriculum and innovation in education

Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin, Senior Analyst and Deputy Head of the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division, presented recent OECD analysis and work on creativity and critical thinking, including a practice-engaged research project on how schools and education systems can foster these skills among students.

Members expressed general support for the project, but raised several issues that can operate as barriers to incorporating increased creativity and critical thinking into teaching. These include teachers' lack of freedom to depart from the curriculum, the increased focus on assessment in many education systems, and the time required to embed and implement changes to the curriculum in a context where teachers are already facing increasingly intense workloads.

Discussion on current and future priorities for the TUAC Working Group on Education and Skills

This session provided an opportunity for members to provide feedback on meetings of the TUAC Working Group, on a proposed process for nominating representatives to OECD committees and working parties, and on key priorities for the Group going forwards.

Going forwards, members proposed structuring the meeting agenda around key themes, such as AI and digitalisation and the green transition, and providing space for discussion around different aspects of these themes, with the idea of identifying common trade union positions and policy priorities.

Update on the Programme for International Student Assessment

Tue Halgreen, Senior Analyst with the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), presented an update on the progress and release of the results of the OECD's PISA 2022 and the plans for PISA 2025.

The issue was raised as to how participating schools are selected and whether measures are in place to try and ensure that the participating schools in each country are representative.

Priorities of the OECD's Centre for Skills for 2023

El Iza Mohamedou, Head of the OECD's Centre for Skills, provided an overview of the work of the Centre for Skills for 2023. Highlighted elements included:

- The Skills Outlook 2023, due to be published in September, which will address three thematic areas: (i) skills and health promotion; (ii) skills for the green transition; and (iii) skills for the digital transition.
- Country reviews on aspects of VET, including a review related to teacher professional development in France, VET and the green transition in Finland, and VET quality assurance in Lithuania.
- Thematic analysis projects on VET and the green transition, on the design and delivery of VET qualifications, and on quality assurance in adult learning.

The Working Group reconvened on 2nd and 3rd November and UTU was represented by Jacquie White, General Secretary, and Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary. Topics addressed included:

Progress in artificial intelligence and the implications for education and skills

Marc Fuster Rabella and Sam Mitchell, both Analysts within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, presented an overview of and some key findings from the OECD's Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Skills project. Working Group members discussed the skills students will need to work with AI and to be able to review its outputs. Working Group members also emphasised that, while AI tools can play a role in supporting learning, they should not be regarded as a replacement for the human support students need and currently receive from teachers and school staff.

Digital technologies in education: risks, opportunities and policy priorities

Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin, Senior Analyst within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, provided an overview of the OECD's view on the opportunities, challenges and policy priorities related to AI and digitalisation in education. This was followed by a presentation from Rob Weil, Director of Research, Policy and Field Programmes with the American

Federation of Teachers, on the key issues from a trade union perspective.

During the discussion that followed, members emphasised the need for teachers to be provided with the necessary training and time to learn how to work with AI tools effectively and noted that there was a risk that the increased focus on personalised learning would result in additional work for teachers, along with the potential for AI to diminish teachers' agency and to reduce human interaction between students and teachers.

Digital technologies in education: implications and opportunities for equity

Professor Leslie Loble, Industry Professor at the University of Technology Sydney, presented the key findings from her recent report Shaping AI and Edtech to Tackle Australia's Learning Divide. During the discussion that followed, members highlighted the fact that the global EdTech market is dominated by a small number of countries and that this raises a number of concerns. Members also noted that AI poses very real risks to the enjoyment of the right to education and emphasised the crucial importance of social dialogue around the use of AI in education.

Education At A Glance 2023

Viktoria Kis, Analyst within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, presented some of the key findings and conclusions from the 2023 edition of the OECD's Education At A Glance publication. During the discussing that followed, members noted that negative perceptions of Vocational Education and Training continue to be an issue in many education systems. Members also noted that future OECD research into the working conditions of apprentices would be useful, highlighting that apprentices are not paid in many OECD countries.

Update on the OECD's international assessment of vocational education and training

Michael Ward, Senior Analyst within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, and Malgorzata Kuczera, Policy Analyst within the OECD Centre for Skills, presented an update on the development of the framework for the OECD's

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new international assessment for vocational education and training.

The research workforce of the future

Carthage Smith, Senior Policy Analyst and Lead Coordinator with the OECD's Global Science Forum, presented some key findings from a recent report on the career options of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers and shared some insights from the Forum's current work on equity, diversity and inclusion in the research workforce.

Update on the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey 2024

Ruo Chen Li, Senior Project Manager within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, provided an overview of the 2024 edition of the OECD Teaching and Learning Survey. The discussion that followed largely focused on how TALIS can be used as part of advocacy efforts for improved working conditions and support for teachers and the potential role the OECD could play in facilitating discussion of the results among national governments and trade unions.

Skills for the green transition

Francesca Borgonovi, Senior Policy Analyst within the OECD Centre for Skills, presented some key findings and conclusions from a recent OECD Working Paper on the effects of the EU Fit for 55 package on labour markets and the demand for skills. This was followed by a presentation from Johan Enfeldt, Research Officer with the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, on the two national agreements recently concluded by the Swedish social partners. During the discussion that followed, members emphasised the importance of measures to address the barriers workers face in accessing lifelong learning opportunities and to improve validation of workers' existing skills. Members also highlighted the need for governments to work closely with social partners to improve participation in lifelong learning.

Equity and inclusion in education

Cecilia Mezzanotte, Analyst within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, presented some key findings from the OECD report Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding

Strength Through Diversity and provided an update on the OECD's ongoing work on advancing equity in and through education. During the discussion that followed, members

highlighted that a substantial increase in resources would be required in most countries in order for schools to be able to implement the recommendations advanced in the report. Members also emphasised the importance of collaboration with trade unions in monitoring equity and inclusion in education.

New professionalism and the future of teaching

Jason McGrath, Analyst, and Claire Shewbridge, Senior Analyst within the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, presented an update on the Directorate's recent work on a future vision for the teaching profession, including a set of tools to support multi-stakeholder collaboration. During the discussion that followed, members noted that while teachers want to be forward-looking and vision-oriented, their current working conditions (including workload) and lack of funding in education make this impossible. Members also highlighted the risks of using private-sector terminology and concepts ("clients") in education. Members emphasised the importance of working closely with stakeholders, including trade unions, in future work in this area.

Attendance at TUAC is very informative for two reasons. Firstly, it serves to emphasise the fact that teachers throughout Europe, operating under different forms of governance, are experiencing the same issues. Secondly, it allows those same colleagues to share ideas, suggest solutions, and work in solidarity to improve the lot of the teaching profession.

EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL (EI)

The first-ever EI Online Congress took place on 11th to 13th July and was attended by the President and General Secretary.

The Congress, which was the 9th World Congress, had been due to take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in line with the Constitution which states that 'the Congress shall meet in

ordinary session at least every four years'. However, when the Executive Board came together in late 2021 to make a final decision, COVID-19 related travel restrictions were still in place in many countries, and EI did not want to have an in-

person Congress where as many as half of the delegates were at risk of not being able to travel and enter Argentina.

The 9th World Congress, then, had only a limited agenda with a view to meeting in person in Buenos Aires next year. The first important matter under consideration was then an amendment to the Constitution that would allow the Executive Board to take decisive action in times of crises, for example, in this instance, postponing Congress until it could be organised safely for everyone.

Congress was also invited to adopt a one-year programme of activities that would help EI pursue its strategic objectives through the Buenos Aires Congress next July.

The limited agenda included Adoption of Rules of Debate,

Adoption of Limited Congress Business, General Secretary's Progress Report, Report on Financial Statements and Presentation by General Secretary of Programme and Budget for the year 2024, and dues rate proposal.

Whilst it was unfortunate not to be able to meet in person, the participation in an online conference with representatives from all five continents was certainly a new and interesting experience which brought home just how close we are together even though we are far apart.

BIGTU - SECONDARY QUALIFICATIONS SEMINAR

Following the successful BIGTU seminar on Qualifications in 2022, an online meeting took place in September 2023. The meeting included a briefing of the "It's Our Future - Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment" (Hayward Report) published in Scotland. Updates from the various jurisdictions were also made. There was also a discussion around qualifications and artificial intelligence and the implication for teachers, school and for teacher unions.

NITPS Scheme Advisory Board

UTU is represented on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) by the General Secretary, Jacquie White. Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer, substitutes for the General Secretary when required.

Meetings took place on 13th June 2023, 17th October 2023 and 13th February 2024. The UTU also attended the NI Public Service Pension Scheme Conference, 10th October 2023, at the Titanic Hotel, Belfast.

Meetings alternate between physical meetings in UTU HQ and online via TEAMS.

The SAB meetings dealt with the following issues:

OPT-OUT STATISTICS

Following the trend that we have monitored over the past years, the number of teachers opting out of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) remains low. The majority reason (unsurprisingly) for 'opting out' do so because they are auto enrolled into receipt of pension. The remaining teachers cite financial and contractual reasons.

SCHEME VALUATION

The NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) actuary, the Government Actuary's Department (GAD), is under a statutory duty to carry out actuarial valuations of public service pension schemes every 4 years, conducted in accordance with the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014, Directions issued by Department of Finance (DoF) and scheme regulations. This consultation and briefing took place at UTU HQ on the 13th June 2023.

The 2020 valuation of the NITPS has concluded. The three component reports produced by GAD, which make up the formal reporting of the valuation, are available on the DENI website.

The NITPS 2020 valuation results are:

- Employer contributions

The employer contribution rate will increase by 4%, from the previous rate of 25.1% to 29.1%, with effect from 01 April 2024. The entirety of the employer contribution rate increase is directly attributed to the Government's change to the SCAPE discount rate.

- Employee contributions

The scheme is currently realising a member contribution yield of 9.4%, against the target yield of 9.6% as set out in the scheme rules. Any deficit against the 9.6% target over the implementation period will be carried forward to the next valuation, meaning that there will be no change to the rate of employee pension contributions. Employee contribution rates are tiered and linked to salary bands. The latest circular regarding employee contributions is Circular Number: 2024/02 and is available on the UTU website.

- Member benefits

The result of 10.2% of pensionable pay is within the 3% "corridor" for the cost cap, the cost cap floor being 10.2%, therefore no changes are required to member benefits to rectify a breach. This means no change.

LEGISLATION/LEGAL UPDATES

a) McCloud Judgement – Transition Protection Update
On 1 October 2023, all pensionable service accrued by affected members during the Remedy Period (01 April 2015 until 31 March 2022) were rolled back to the legacy final salary scheme.

NITPS are currently in the process of contacting eligible members with a view to issuing remedial service statements displaying the options available under the Remedy. Currently no changes are made to any benefits.

Members who joined CARE from 01 April 2015 as a result of the 'rollback' to final salary scheme for the remedy period now have another opportunity to buy-out any actuarial reduction (normally 3%pa) between 65 and the Normal Pension Age (NPA) in the reformed CARE scheme. In other words, you can effectively reduce your NPA in the reformed scheme from the state pension age, down to your 65th birthday, at which point you take those benefits in full. This is only available for six months subsequent to rollback, so must be actioned by 31 March 2024.

Remediable service statements will be in law as of April 2025 but may be available sooner. Then each year after, it will be included as part of your annual benefit statement.

b) Survivor benefits equalisation / Goodwin Judgement
An Employment Tribunal case for Goodwin identified that male survivors of opposite-sex marriages and civil partnerships are treated less favourably than survivors in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships. As a consequence, changes are required to public service pension schemes, including the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme, to ensure an opposite sex spouse or civil partner of an eligible female scheme member will now receive the same survivor entitlements in the scheme as a same sex spouse or civil partner.

Accordingly, the Department will, in due course, launch a consultation regarding changes to the scheme regulations in order to implement the equalisation of benefits for eligible male survivors of female scheme members. In the interim period, DE will consider application of the policy intent if a priority case should arise, which is the case within the other public sector services.

c) Pensions Dashboard
Pensions dashboards enable individuals to access their pensions information online, securely and all in one place, thereby supporting better planning for retirement. The specific regulation came into operation from the 9 August 2023 (The Pensions Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 (S.R. 2023 No.113).

NITPS Scheme Advisory Board

For the NITPS, the 'Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Portal' has been launched and is available directly via a web search or through the Department of Education website. This on-line portal allows members to access their NITPS information online, including pension advice slips and P60s (for pensioner members) and Annual Benefit Statements (for current active members/teachers) and make changes to personal details such as address and bank details. A number of information sheets (in draft form) have been released for communication, to be agreed before going live onto the portal.

ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT

Due to staffing and recruitment issues within the Ill health retirement medical assessment team the Department employed the services of a new external provider to help with a mounting backlog of claims (as a result of the previous issues with OHS).

The new provider has managed to heavily reduce the backlog and there's been a positive trend variation in ill health retirement applications being accepted. For example, during September and October (2023) 41 cases were considered for Ill-Health retirement – in 28 cases there was a recommendation of a Partial Incapacity Benefit, 7 were recommended for Total Incapacity Benefit, 5 refusals were recommended, and in the remaining case further information has been requested by the Medical Officer. Two of the recommended awards resulted from an appeal of previous OHS decisions.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is the largest civil society organisation on the island of Ireland, representing and campaigning on behalf of some 800,000 working people. There are currently 44 unions affiliated to Congress, north and south of the border.

ICTU has an Executive Committee which meets in Dublin once a month. Owen Reidy is the General Secretary of ICTU and the President is currently Justin McCamphill of NASUWT. The Executive Council meets monthly in Dublin and UTU is represented by Jacquie White.

ICTU has a Northern Ireland Committee (NIC/ICTU) which also meets monthly and focuses on Northern Ireland issues. NIC/ICTU is led by the Assistant General Secretary, Gerry Murphy, previously of INTO, and is chaired currently by Paddy Mackle of UCU.

Jacquie White, General Secretary of UTU, is the current Vice-Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee.

ICTU BIENNIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE (BDC)

The ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference took place in Kilkenny from the 4th to 6th July 2023. UTU delegates at the BDC were: Lynelle Fenton, President, Janice Mullan, Heather Milligan, Louise Brown, Leigh McKay, Vice-President, and Jacquie White, General Secretary.

UTU brought the following motion to the BDC:

EDUCATION FUNDING IN NI

The role of the education system of any country is to form the bedrock of the future by ensuring that each child is supported in reaching their full potential and can contribute to the progression of society in an informed and productive manner.

Congress has grave concerns about the current state of the education system in Northern Ireland and despairs at the chronic long-term under-investment and the huge negative implications of the proposed cuts moving into the future. Congress further deplores the continued undervaluing of

all education workers and fears that the expertise on which the system is based will be eroded in the absence of fair and appropriate pay settlements.

Congress calls on all political parties, in NI or with responsibility for NI, to commit to a properly funded and properly resourced education system which values, and is seen to value, both children and education workers, and to deliver on that commitment as a matter of urgency.

The motion was proposed by Lynelle Fenton, seconded by Jacquie White and supported by colleagues from INTO and NASUWT.

The election for the new ICTU Executive Council was held during the Congress and Jacquie White took up a position for the next term.

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE: IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS (ICTU)

ICTU has a Northern Ireland Committee (NIC/ICTU) which also meets monthly and focuses on Northern Ireland issues. The work of NIC/ICTU is led by the Assistant General Secretary, Gerry Murphy, previously of INTO, and the committee is chaired currently by Paddy Mackle of UCU.

Jacquie White, General Secretary of UTU, is the current Vice-Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee.

Issues considered on a monthly basis include:

- Organising, Industrial, Economic & Political Affairs
- Political Engagement
- Engagement with other public bodies & other stakeholders
- Equality & Human Rights
- International issues
- Training, Education & Cultural activism

ICTU and NIC/ICTU hold conferences in alternate years but, due to the pandemic, are only beginning to move back into the regular cycle. The NIC is due to hold its next conference in November 2024.

Further information on the work of either the ICTU Executive Council or the NIC is available from the General Secretary on request.

COMMITTEES

ICTU has a number of committees which respond to current issues and bring forward the work arising from the policy conferences.

UTU were represented by the following members and Officials this year.

ICTU WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Lynelle Fenton, President
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Joseph Wyglendacz, Field Officer

ICTU EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

ICTU EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU LGBT COMMITTEE

Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer
Leigh McKay, CEC Vice-President

ICTU ETHNIC MINORITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU DISABILITY COMMITTEE

Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer
Pauline Hurst

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

ICTU GLOBAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

ICTU YOUTH COMMITTEE

Aaron Davis, CEC

ICTU EDUCATION AND TRAINING GROUP

Gillian Dunlop, South-Eastern Area
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

ETUG

ICTU WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The ICTU Women's Committee is an all-Ireland committee with members meeting in each jurisdiction and jointly as appropriate. The Northern Ireland Committee is chaired currently by Maxine Murphy-Higgins of NASUWT. The committee is supported by Clare Moore, Equality Officer for NIC/ICTU, and UTU was represented this year by Jacque White, GS, and Lynelle Fenton, President.

The biennial Action Plan of the Women's Committee seeks to carry forward policy established at the Women's Conference. The full committee meets on a bi-monthly basis with the intervening time being used by working groups for meetings and related events and activities.

WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF THE ISLES

The Women's Council of the Isles, which brings together the Congress Women's Committees from all five jurisdictions, took place on the 19-20 October 2023 at the Imperial Hotel, Llandudno.

The theme was: **Empowering Women, Empowering Unions: Balancing Caring Responsibilities and Leadership** and the five committees presented and focused on topics around caring and leadership, building ways of sharing information and working together. The event was attended by Lynelle Fenton and Jacque White, and, as ever, was informative,

stimulating and thought-provoking.

Jacque White joined Eileen Gorman of FSU and Tina Creevey of NIPSA in presenting the work in NI around Women and Leadership.

ICTU Women's Conference

The ICTU Women's Conference took place on Thursday & Friday 7/8 March at The Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone. The event was timed to coincide with International Women's Day.

The theme of the Conference this year was: **Valuing Care in all its forms – Prerequisite for a Sustainable Future** and unions dealt with a wide range of motions around gender-based issues in the workplace, particularly in relation to the balancing of caring responsibilities with employment. UTU was represented by Leigh McKay, Vice-President, and Janice Mullan, who put forward the following motion.

Motion 21. Facilitation of breast-feeding

Conference has grave concerns about the on-going lack of understanding and support in many workplaces regarding the facilitation of breastfeeding.

Conference believes that the value added to the employment situation for working mothers by providing such support would far outweigh the relatively straightforward adjustments which would be necessary to support women in implementing choice for the care of their children in the early stages of return from maternity leave.

Conference further believes that the fact that so many workplaces fail to support workers in this regard is a sad reflection on the appreciation of some employers for the multiple roles carried out by women in our society.

Conference calls on Congress to assert pressure through any and all appropriate channels across both jurisdictions to ensure that employers are aware of and, more importantly, fulfil their responsibilities to provide the necessary support

and resources required for nursing mothers in the workplace.

Appreciation goes to Clare Moore, Equality Officer, ICTU, and the members of the Committee for the organisation of this event, but also for their on-going solidarity and support.

RALLIES

UTU also joined affiliates from ICTU at the May Day Rally, Pride and the Generalised Day of Strike Action for public sector workers.

Engagement with External Bodies

UTU engages with a range of external bodies throughout the year to represent members' interests.

Some of this engagement takes place in conjunction with NITC colleagues with other engagement being solely in a UTU capacity.

This section gives a flavour of the work but if anyone requires further information relating to your context on any of the areas cited, please contact the General Secretary.

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Engagement
Engagement with ETI has continued in a valuable and constructive manner, both in regard to teachers and school leaders – members – and with NITC.

The EA/NITC group meets regularly to establish a new way forward. It is populated by Deputy Chief Inspectors and NITC representatives, and is competently led by Nuala O'Donnell of INTO who has carried out some excellent work in this area. UTU is represented by Jacquie White.

Proposed changes to the inspection process are as follows:

- Stronger focus on school/organisation context; time is built in for joint planning work with the school/organisation in advance of an inspection.
- School/organisation self-evaluation and development priorities are central to inspection process.
- An increased focus on professional dialogue during the inspection, with inspectors looking 'at' not 'for'.
- Reporting will be radically different. Reports will: contain no published gradings; outline the unique context of each school/organisation; are structured around the five Core Questions; have bespoke conclusions for each school/organisation; and outline clearly any follow-on or follow-up actions, including the sharing of effective practice.

Commitment has been given to:

- Continuation of, and learning from, the pilot inspections in early years, work-based learning, and youth.
- Ongoing communication and engagement with key stakeholders.
- Constructive collaboration with teaching union colleagues.

Information will also be made available on:

- ETI School Inspections –What to Expect
- What to expect from your District Inspector(DI)

ETI evaluations

Work has been on-going through the District Inspectors to inform system level reports which have taken place in the following areas:

- Teacher Professional Learning to Support Pupils with SEN;
- Digital Skills in the Curriculum;
- Future Ready Digital Learning;

One of the aims was to highlight the difficulties faced by schools – space, resources, time – in delivering, and feedback received by UTU around the experience was positive. It is important to emphasise the need for schools to be totally honest in these engagements as we have already seen the feedback to DE raising the need to augment resources and support.

ETI is also involved in the Review of Accountability as much of the workload in this area has arisen from the previous pre-inspection process.

Whilst we have not been engaging with ETI due to Industrial Action we have nonetheless created opportunities for practitioners to hear the message from them first-hand. We will continue to build on these engagements in anticipation of the current impasse being resolved.

EA Joint Consultative Forum

This forum meets quarterly and involves EA and the teaching and non-teaching unions. It provides an opportunity for EA to share information on current activity.

Topics have included:

- Education Authority - Overview of Addressing Bullying in Schools Act activities
- Equality Commission NI – Overview of Commission's position on prejudice-based bullying
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Relationships and Sexuality Education.

EA/NITC Engagement Forum

Whilst not a negotiating forum, EA instigated these meetings to update NITC on the work of EA. More recently, NITC has been much more pro-active in aiming to shape the agenda. The forum meets quarterly and the most recent areas under discussion have been:

- Update on EA Finance & Savings and Sustainability
- People Focused HR Programme
- Update on SEN Locality Integrated Teams
- Disability Convention
- Children Looked After (CLA) Processes
- Educational Psychology Assessments

Education Safeguarding Forum

The Safeguarding Forum seeks to bring all parties with a role in Child Protection together to ensure that all lessons learned from key cases are disseminated throughout the system for the good of all children. NITC has two representatives on the forum.

The following are issues which have been under consideration:

- Operation Encompass update
- First joint inspection of Child Protection Arrangements
- Update on Safeguarding Issues
- Impact of Industrial Action
- Update from Southern IAR and next steps
- ASRs and Safeguarding Update

These are highly sensitive topics and the team involved deal directly with schools in relation to individual situations. Any member requiring further information should contact the General Secretary.

EA One

The EA One team focuses on the digitalisation of EA functions such as pay roll and recruitment. Recent engagement has examined the practicalities around dealing with individual teacher situations such as flexible working, career breaks and brief absences.

Engagement with External Bodies

Children and Young People's Service (CYPS)

Meetings between NITC representatives and CYPS give unions an opportunity to raise the concerns faced by members in the area of SEN support and the terms and conditions of teachers who work in this service.

The growing need for this service combined with the significant cuts to the budget continue to cause severe pressure. As a result, one of the major issues discussed this year was the SEND Transformation Programme.

Due to the lack of an executive and with further funding cuts imposed on the education system, the original plan for the SEND Transformation Programme had to be changed, mirroring what essentially amounted to a 50% shortfall in funding. With the EA's aim to amalgamate the vast majority of EA support services into local integrated teams by September 2024, UTU has raised major concerns in relation to the timeframe, consultation periods, changes to working practices and locations for our members and the rollout and implementation of the new referral and support systems.

The other major topic of discussion has been SEND Placements for 2023 and also for 2024. The number of children with SEND has seen an increase of around 20% and due to the system's lack of adequate tools and ways to predict this increase earlier and more accurately, this has led to the introduction of a significant number of learning support classrooms attached to mainstream schools. As with what are seeing with the SEND Transformation Programme now, the timeline for establishing these units caused great concerns amongst our membership, schools and also parents. Issues in relation to this continue to arise, such as staff not receiving the training they require and the lack of forward planning for the following years.

The following actions are planned:

More comprehensive and cross-service data collection, analysis and reporting will have to be put in place to better predict pupil needs and demands on the service.

CYPS and TU side will aim to meet more regularly in order to oversee the SEND Transformation process and any associated issues.

Other matters discussed:

- Changes to travel forms
- Changes to processes involving CLA
- Consultation documents

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

Members of the post-primary education sub-committee continued to engage with the CCEA team regarding issues around and changes to post-primary assessment.

The post-primary members who represent UTU are dedicated and passionate teachers with a range of subject specialisms, sectors and positions in school. Their engagement with CCEA around the issues happening on the ground and in real-time means that the teacher voice and student experiences are fed back quickly and appropriately to the examining bodies.

EA Preventing Violence at Work

A group has been established by EA to deal with the issue of preventing violence at work. Members of the group include representatives from DE, EA, Safeguarding and NITC.

Work is taking place across a range of working groups who are addressing the following issues:

- Communication to Schools regarding Preventing Violence in the Workplace Policy and Guidance documents
- Social Media Policy for Schools

W1 - Development of a training toolkit and information awareness briefings for Governors and staff on the implementation of the Policies and Guidance.

W2 - Explore channels for gathering intelligence on volume and type of incidents and methodologies for recording incidents and reporting on trends.

W3 - Gather and share formally examples of effective practice in preventing and addressing aggressive and abusive incidents.

W4 - Development of key media messaging formats including posters, for use in and by schools.

NITC welcomes the work in this area but is seeking clarification on the mechanism through which it will be applicable to all teachers.

Political Engagement

Whilst UTU has engaged with politicians from DUP and Alliance this year, political engagement has been impacted by the current situation.

Prior to the re-establishment of the Assembly, NITC met with Diane Dodds in May and held a lobbying exercise with all political parties in October.

Since the re-establishment we have met with the recently appointed Minister for Education, Paul Givan, and have briefed the new Education Committee.

Central Executive Committee

OFFICERS

Lynelle Fenton, President
Leigh McKay, Vice-President
Louise Creelman, Ex- President
Jacquie White, General Secretary

HONORARY TREASURER

David Thompson

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION

Louise Brown
Jon Bleakney
Jaki Gargan

NORTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Jill Johnston
Emma Loughridge
Jillian Jones
Mark Creelman

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Aaron Davidson
Steven Savage
Heather Wilson
Jill Ravey

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Aaron Davis
Heather Milligan
Grace McCullough

WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Audrey Dempsey
Joy Carrothers
Janice Mullan

OBSERVERS

Pauline Hurst

Attendances at CEC

POSSIBLE ATTENDANCES: Twelve Meetings - Unless stated otherwise

OFFICERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Lynelle Fenton, President | 12 |
| Leigh McKay, Vice-President | 11 |
| Louise Creelman, Ex-President | 10 |

OFFICIAL/CLERICAL STAFF - in attendance

| | |
|--|----|
| Jacquie White, General Secretary | 12 |
| Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary | 12 |
| Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer | 9 |
| Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer | 12 |
| Lindsay Osborne | 7 |
| Tony McCabe | 7 |

HONORARY TREASURER

| | |
|----------------|---|
| David Thompson | 9 |
|----------------|---|

BELFAST AREA

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Louise Brown | 10 |
| Jon Bleakney | 10 |
| Jaki Gargan | 5 |

NORTH-EASTERN AREA

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Jill Johnston | 11 |
| Emma Loughridge | 6 |
| Jillian Jones | 9 |
| Mark Creelman | 10 |

SOUTHERN AREA

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Steven Savage | 6 |
| Aaron Davidson | 2 |
| Heather Wilson | 8 |
| Jill Ravey | 11 |

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Aaron Davis | 9 |
| Heather Milligan | 10 |
| Grace McCullough | 8 |

WESTERN AREA

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Audrey Dempsey | 10 |
| Joy Carrothers | 9 |
| Janice Mullan | 11 |

OBSERVERS

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Pauline Hurst | (5) 5 |
|---------------|-------|

Sub-Committees of the C.E.C.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 Stephen McCord, **Deputy General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Audrey Dempsey
 Jon Bleakney
 Heather Wilson
 Aaron Davis
 Emma Loughridge

Convener: Louise Creelman, Ex-President

EDUCATION AND POLICY

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 Stephen McCord, **Deputy General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Janice Mullan
 Jon Bleakney
 Aaron Davidson
 Aaron Davis
 Mark Creelman
 Alistair Orr
 Janet Burke
 Naomi Billington
 Ashton Shields
 Rene Johnston
 Colin Irwin
 Callum Hannigan
 Ashley Knox
 Jennifer Sturgeon

Convener: Stephen McCord, DGS

ORGANISATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Joseph Wyglendacz
 Rebekka Gilpin
 Joy Carrothers
 Jaki Gargan
 Steven Savage
 Heather Milligan
 Jill Johnston
 Pauline Hurst
 Jan Snoodly
 Jennifer McCann
 Charlene Trolan
 Caroline Friel
 Beverly Esler

Convener: Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

CONFERENCE

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 Stephen McCord, **Deputy General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Karen Taylor, **Executive Officer**
 Louise Brown
 Jill Ravey
 Heather Milligan
 Jillian Jones
 Janice Mullan

Convener: Louise Creelman, Ex-President

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Rebekka Gilpin
 Janice Mullan
 Jaki Gargan
 Heather Wilson
 Grace McCullough
 Jillian Jones
 Ann Orr
 Alison Steen
 Naomi Billington
 Andrea Sawyers
 Claire Price
 Emily Taylor
 Louise Kincaid
 Estelle McCord

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, President

ICT

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Stephen McCord, **Deputy General Secretary**
 Tony McCabe
 Joy Carrothers
 Aaron Davidson
 Aaron Davis
 Mark Creelman
 Jaki Gargan

Convener: Stephen McCord, DGS

EDITORIAL PANEL - UTU NEWS

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 Stephen McCord, **Deputy General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Tony McCabe, **Communications Officer**

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, President

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 Joseph Wyglendacz
 Rebekka Gilpin
 Audrey Dempsey
 Louise Brown
 Heather Wilson
 Heather Milligan
 Jillian Jones
 Karen Atchison
 Janet Burke
 Jonny Trimble
 Terry Shields
 Eileen McKee
 June Murphy
 David Gault

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, President

PROPERTY

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 Stephen McCord, **Deputy General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Heather Arrell
 Karen Taylor
 Mervin McClean
 Joy Carrothers
 Jon Bleakney
 Steven Savage
 Grace McCullough
 Mark Creelman

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, President

APPOINTMENTS

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**
 Audrey Dempsey
 Louise Brown
 Stephen Savage
 Jill Jones
 Grace McCullough

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, President

RULES AND CONSTITUTION

Lynelle Fenton, **President**
 Leigh McKay, **Vice-President**
 Louise Creelman, **Ex-President**
 Jacquie White, **General Secretary**
 David Thompson, **Honorary Treasurer**

Convener: Jacquie White, General Secretary

UTU Representation on ICTU

ICTU WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Lynelle Fenton, President
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer

ICTU EQUALITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

ICTU EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU LGBT COMMITTEE

Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer
Leigh McKay, CEC Vice-President

ICTU ETHNIC MINORITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU DISABILITY COMMITTEE

Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer
Pauline Hurst, Observer

ICTU GLOBAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

ICTU YOUTH COMMITTEE

Aaron Davis, CEC

ICTU EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Gillian Dunlop, South-Eastern Area
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

ICTU CULTURE AND ARTS

Lynelle Fenton, President

Honorary Vice-Presidents and Trustees

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS

Hope Kerr
Maura Alexander, MBE.
John Carr
Ronnie Smith
Alistair Orr
Lexie Scott
Avril Hall-Callaghan
Arlene Allen

UNION BUILDING TRUSTEES

Heather Beattie
Mervyn McClean
Sally McKee
Alistair Orr
Lewis Love

PENSION TRUSTEES

Jacque White, General Secretary
Rosemary Barton
Lexie Scott
Sally McKee
George McVeigh
Alistair Orr

UNION FUND TRUSTEES

Lynelle Fenton, President
Leigh McKay, Vice-President
Lousie Creelman, Ex-President
David Thompson, Honorary Treasurer

President 2023/2024

Ballygawley native Lynelle Fenton took up office as President of the Ulster Teachers' Union



New CEC Elected

The Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Ulster Teachers Union (UTU) includes the President, Vice-President, Ex-President, one Representative from each of the five area associations, and two full-time officials: the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, and Honorary Treasurer. Its duties entail executing Conference orders, reporting on resolution implementation, and managing the organisation between Conferences.



Elected Vice-Chair of NIC-ICTU

UTU General Secretary Jacquie White elected Vice-Chair of NIC-ICTU, representing 34 trade unions with over 200,000 members in Northern Ireland. This appointment amplifies UTU's influence within the broader trade union community, solidifying its commitment to advocating for workers' rights and interests across various sectors.



DID YOU KNOW?
ON AVERAGE, UTU RECEIVES OVER 1000 CALLS PER MONTH.

Holding talks at Stormont

Jacquie White, alongside the leads from our sister teaching unions, met with each of the 5 political parties.

The engagement with politicians allowed the issues of pay, school funding, SEN provision & employing authority support to schools to be discussed.

DID YOU KNOW?
UTU HOSTED 26 WEBINARS & SEMINARS THIS YEAR WITH THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS ATTENDING.

DID YOU KNOW?
616 NEW MEMBERS ADDED TO OUR MEMBERSHIP BETWEEN APRIL 2023 AND MARCH 2024. Figures correct as of February 2024.

UTU Members vote for Strike Action

In a historic move, UTU members voted for strike action for the first time in the union's 103-year history. Shortly thereafter, UTU members commenced a coordinated campaign of industrial action short of a strike alongside their fellow trade unionists from other teaching unions.



Meeting the Teachers of tomorrow

In a historic move, UTU members voted for strike action for the first time in the union's 103-year history. Shortly thereafter, UTU members commenced a coordinated campaign of industrial action short of a strike alongside their fellow trade unionists from other teaching unions.



DID YOU KNOW?
UTU RECRUITED OVER 400 STUDENTS AT THIS YEARS FRESHER FAIR EVENTS.

A YEAR IN REVIEW



UTU Stands United with Workers at May Day Rally

The Ulster Teachers' Union enthusiastically participated in the May Day rally, demonstrating unequivocal solidarity with workers across Northern Ireland. UTU reaffirms its commitment to championing the rights and welfare of all workers, emphasising the pivotal role educators play in advocating for social justice and equitable treatment in the workplace.

DID YOU KNOW?

BETWEEN APRIL 2023 AND FEBRUARY 2024, UTU HAS SENT AND RECEIVED OVER 88,000* FROM MEMBERS, PARTNERS AND OUTSIDE BODIES. *including some spam



KEVIN SCOTT / BELFAST TELEGRAPH

UTU Members Rally Across Province for Fair Pay and Public Service Investment

Ulster Teachers' Union members joined with other public service Trade Unions at Belfast City Hall for a mass rally in protest for fair pay and for investment in public services. Across the province members took to picket lines or joined other rallies in Londonderry, Ballymena, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh and Enniskillen.

Pride in our Union

UTU stood united at Belfast Pride, reaffirming its zero-tolerance stance against all forms of prejudice-related bullying, including cyberbullying and sexual harassment. This commitment underscores UTU's dedication to creating safe and inclusive environments for all students and staff.



DID YOU KNOW?

UTU OFFICIALS ADVISED ON 55 SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE CASES THIS YEAR, CHAMPIONING WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR WORKING PARENTS.

Joining Forces to Deliver for Reps

Alongside our sister unions, INTO and NEU, UTU has ran a series of training courses aimed at School Reps. The training delved into the intricacies of representing members at the school level, focusing on both collective and individual approaches. Participants gained valuable insights into effective representation strategies and enhance their skills in advocating for members in diverse situations. These courses help further empower members in their role as a representative and provide them with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate various scenarios effectively.



The Fight for Education Continues

A dismal pay offer made in February 2022 was firmly rejected by members. This led to a ballot for industrial action with members giving the Central Executive Committee a mandate for strike action in October 2023.

CEC convened regularly, attentively listened to members' voices, reflected, and deliberated extensively before taking the decisive and landmark step of calling for a strike among our members, a significant milestone for UTU.

Our members stood unified in solidarity at rallies and at picket lines, firmly advocating for their rights for fair pay, not just for themselves but for future generations of teachers and to ensure that our children continue to have the education they deserve.

2023-2024

Conference Resolutions 2023

Annual Conference determines policy and determines part of the work programme for CEC.

Movement in many areas has been difficult due to the absence of an Assembly and the accompanying lack of funding. Nevertheless, UTU has been raising the issues and will seek to push further forward when circumstances allow.

Progress on resolutions to date is as follows.

Resolutions 1 and 2 related to misuse of on-line learning platforms and social media. As we moved out of Covid, and due to the impact of Action Short of Strike, the concerns about the abuse by some parents of on-line learning platforms were allayed. UTU continues to be mindful of the concerns of members in this area and will be keeping a watching brief on developments as we move out of action.

The issue of social media abuse has finally come to the attention of the employing authorities and guidance has been developed in relation to some platforms. This is part of work taking place around a wider remit of addressing violence against teachers in different forms; the main issue here, however, is ensuring that this work, when completed, will apply to all teachers regardless of sector.

Resolutions 4 and 6 dealing with assisted pregnancy and breastfeeding have been raised repeatedly at Joint Secretaries Forum with a view to linking them in to the on-going work on family friendly policies. When pay talks conclude we are hopeful that the space will be created to make this work more robust.

The issue of breastfeeding in workplaces has also been taken as a motion by UTU to the ICTU Women's Conference.

The part of **Resolution 5** relating to maternity, paternity, adoption has been sitting on the agenda but progress requires funding; the Officials in UTU have, however, developed a very good reputation in delivering the benefits of shared parental leave to members.

There were a range of resolutions last year raising concerns about funding and support for Special Educational Needs, Educational Psychology services, and support services for our children. UTU, in conjunction with our NITC colleagues, has made a strong case both in the media and with the employers in a range of fora to raise public awareness here. The messages have clearly been heard by the returning MLAs and we can only hope to see additional funding and transformation of service soon.

We have further continued to seek information and challenge around the appropriacy of placement of children with a range of additional needs. This is a concern which is likely to continue for some time. More recently, it featured on the NITC briefing paper and hearing with the Education Committee; all stakeholders in education have a part to play in addressing what is becoming a crisis in our system.

The funding cuts and spiralling inflation formed a backdrop to these resolutions last year; it can only be hoped that the political stabilisation and funding for transformation will provide an improving platform for change.

Resolution 9, dealing with Operation Encompass and Domestic Abuse concerns, has moved forward. The programme is now fully rolled out and has been embraced by schools to support children. UTU continues to push with DE the need to highlight even further the area of Domestic Abuse within the RSE curriculum and recent PSNI statistics show that growing numbers of young people 16-18 are reporting which is progress. In our society, the impact of this issue cannot be underestimated.

Where additional funding was not required for change UTU made some very good progress.

On the back of **Resolution 14** relating to support for teachers with disabilities, UTU put in place a programme of work led by Pauline Hurst, UTU Disability Champion. Relationships have already been established with EA Officers in the EA

Disability Employment Support Service (DESS) and work is moving forward to raise awareness, both amongst teachers for the support available, and with EA in relation to the level of difficulties faced on the ground. A session has been arranged at Annual Conference this year to explore the issues further.

Resolution 15 on Menopause support was put forward last year by a range of strong and vocal women. EA and CCMS have separate menopause policies but UTU continues to seek a TNC policy which applies in all settings. This is raised on a monthly basis at Joint Secretaries Forum and discussions have taken place with EA; we hope to move this forward in the near future. UTU, in conjunction with INTO and NEU, has also run menopause courses for members through ICTU.

Our concern about the virtual nature of the pre-publication meetings which take place when schools are being considered for closure was dealt with in **Resolution 16**. UTU approached the DE and the EA over a number of months and finally got confirmation that these meetings would be in person moving forward.

With an end to the salary dispute in sight, attention is turning back to the implementation of the Reviews. The review linked to Leadership Workload, dealt with in **Resolution 17**, will be prioritised in this work which will commence soon.

The **Resolution 18** challenges in accessing EA Human Resources support have been raised and are recognised. As we move towards funding for transformation it will remain firmly on the agenda.

The same is the case for appropriate funding and support for pastoral care responsibilities, ICT equipment, the electric vehicle/green strategy, class sizes and classroom support. These areas will remain on the agenda for UTU as we move forward into the next phase of change.

Benevolent Fund

The UTU Benevolent Fund serves to offer aid to the spouse, partner, or other relative of a member who passes away while in service. Additionally, it occasionally extends support to members facing financial difficulties on a case-by-case basis.

Since our last conference, there have been three death grants awarded to members families who died in service:

Linda Douglas – Ashgrove Primary School

Alison Redmond – Regent House Preparatory Department

Tanya Russell – Fairhill Primary School

We have also supported members with small grants over the past year due to their or their families personal circumstances.

UTU Partners

Cornmarket Insurance Services

UTU members enjoy the advantages of our longstanding partnership with Cornmarket Insurance Service. As our trusted insurance provider, Cornmarket offers members excellent value on various insurance types including car, home, motorbike, GAP, pet, travel, and temporary car insurance, all tailored to meet your specific needs. The recently launched Cornmarket Protect also offers the member great benefits in one package including motor breakdown, digital doctor access, worldwide travel insurance, mobile phone cover, online counselling and legal expenses cover. Their support for our Annual Conference is greatly appreciated.

Platinum Financial Services

Platinum Financial Planning Ltd. has maintained a longstanding partnership with UTU members, offering comprehensive financial planning services. With a wealth of experience, their team provides expert guidance on all facets of financial planning, particularly excelling in their knowledge of the teachers' pension scheme. Collaboratively, over the past year, we have joined forces with INTO to deliver webinars tailored for pre-retirement and mid-career members. The numbers of members availing of these webinars has increased this year to the highest participation on record. The feedback from participants remains consistently positive, as they receive invaluable assistance navigating the intricacies of pension choices and ensuring that they are prepared for every eventuality.

Membership Plus

Membership Plus offers UTU members a fantastic benefit with their Membership Plus cards. These cards were most recently distributed to members via mail in September 2022. Members have the option to utilise either the physical plastic card or register online and access the electronic app to great savings at various venues across Northern Ireland. Our partnership with Membership Plus remains strong, and we're delighted to observe a rise in members registering for and actively using the card on a consistent basis. We will be gaining member feedback and evaluating the Membership Plus card and app in the coming months as we plan for the next cards to arrive out to members in Autumn 2024.

Mandi Millar

The UTU continues to work in close collaboration with Mandi Millar, who consistently ensured UTU's voice was prominently featured in the media. President Lynelle Fenton, Vice-President Leigh McKay, General Secretary Jacquie White, and Deputy General Secretary Stephen McCord actively participated in discussions on various local radio stations, including Radio Ulster, Radio Foyle, U105, Downtown, and Cool FM, RTE radio and YouTube media outlets. Our presence was also noted on BBC Newsline and UTV lunchtime and evening news broadcasts, with extensive coverage in both local and regional press outlets throughout the year. We must also note that CEC members, activists and teachers participated in media events during each of the three days of action. The red of the Ulster Teachers' Union was prominent on each occasion.

Mandi diligently oversees the use of social media to keep members informed about ongoing issues, utilizing podcasts and short videos, particularly addressing key concerns discussed at the Annual Conference. Mandi's relentless efforts keep UTU at the forefront of educational news year-round, and we express our gratitude for her unwavering support.

Thanks and Appreciation

The President and Central Executive Committee wish to place on record their thanks to the Conveners of Sub-Committees, the Officers of Branches, Area Associations, the Fit Group and School Representatives, all of whom play a vital role in the organisation and without whose efforts the union would be unable to operate as well as it does.

This year we would particularly like to thank all of you, the members, who adhered to the action short of strike, who engaged in strike action and took to the picket lines, and those of you who joined and addressed rallies. Thanks, too, to all of you who engaged with the media, in print, and on radio and television – you made sure our voice was heard. All of your efforts and participation played a vital role in moving the issues forward to resolution. Well done!!

We also wish to recognise our colleagues in INTO, NASUWT, NEU and NAHT. We have all been determined to stand together for our members and their support, wisdom and solidarity has been of benefit to us, the UTU members, and, indeed, to the teaching profession as a whole. It has been greatly appreciated.

The General Secretary would like to record her thanks to this year's President, Lynelle Fenton. Lynelle entered the role with great enthusiasm and always treated her position as a privilege. She worked diligently on building connections and relationships between unions, both locally and further afield, and her hospitality has been second to none! Lynelle's support this year has been greatly appreciated and we wish her every success for the future.

David Thompson, a Past President of UTU, held the post of Honorary Treasurer this year, over-seeing the work of the Financial Executive Officer, Heather Arrell, who is a qualified accountant. David has been committed and conscientious in his duties, making himself available, often at short notice, when his input was required. His wisdom and support has been greatly welcomed and we thank him for his dedication. The General Secretary would also wish to place on record her

sincere thanks to the Central Executive Committee for their excellent and unflinching support in the face of the pay and funding crises. Their energy and enthusiasm have sustained us all when the going was tough and they never failed to step out of their comfort zones in the interests of 'making the case' for members. They have been an excellent committee who have worked tirelessly on behalf of the interests of others and they are to be commended.

The President, GS and CEC appreciate the huge amount of work put in by Tony McCabe regarding the production of UTU News in-house. The magazine is now available in a range of media to facilitate a range of audiences in staff rooms throughout Northern Ireland. Tony has also turned his skills to a range of other design and production tasks and never fails to bring creativity and skill to enhance the outward face of UTU.

The CEC and Officials wish to record their thanks to the Union's Solicitors, Shean Dickson Merrick, for the first class services they provide to UTU members. Their expertise in the sphere of education is second to none and our members feel reassured after they have spoken to Maura, Owen, Bernie or any of the other professional staff to whom they have been referred. We would also like to thank the barristers employed through Shean Dickson Merrick who are all experts in their specific fields and who give excellent advice to our members.

Thanks also to Martin Goodfellow who continued until recently to provide his services in maintaining the grounds of Headquarters to a very high standard. Martin has recently moved to sunnier climes and we wish him all the best for the future.

There are a number of other suppliers with whom we have excellent relationships and we thank them all for their assistance in keeping Headquarters running on a day-to-day basis. Although the political impasse and funding crisis have placed all of us in difficult positions we have always found relationships with representatives of the Department

of Education and the Employing Authorities on a personal level to be cordial and professional. The relationships forged during the development of the Reviews have stood us in good stead in the recent context and it is our hope that this will extend beyond this period to continue to deliver both the outcomes of those same reviews and the employment situations that teachers deserve in the future. We place on record our thanks for their efforts and support.

The CEC would wish to record their thanks to the UTU Officials, Jacquie, Stephen, Rebekka and Joseph, and to the members of the FIT Group, CEC and invited guests who have contributed their expertise to providing support for student teachers, NQTs and RQTs in recent times. We look forward to the next FIT Conference and the opportunity to once again bring fresh eyes and hard-earned experience together.

Finally, the General Secretary would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of the Ulster Teachers' Union during the past year. She would particularly like to thank the staff for their dedication and commitment in maintaining an excellent service to members in what has been a challenging time for many. The team in the office are second to none and we could not deliver for our members without their dedicated and flexible approach. Heartfelt thanks goes to you all.

The membership of UTU has remained steady this year, and much of that can be attributed to the hard work of the CEC, Branch and Area officers and the staff, who always provide members with support when it is required, be that legal advice, representation, counselling or just standing with them when their individual situation is difficult and demanding. It is appreciated.



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