

CONFERENCE REPORT

2025



SPONSORED BY:  Cornmarket

GENERAL SECRETARY INTRODUCTION

Colleagues,

Welcome to UTU Annual Conference 2025.

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

Following the successes of last year we had hoped that we would be in a position to deliver change for members at the 'chalkface' and we started to make some progress as the report details.

However, despite the efforts of the teaching unions, no tangible change was made directly in relation to the outstanding Workforce Reviews and the outworkings of this lack of progress were felt very keenly in the response to the pay offer. Work was then diverted to engaging on this issue and it is to be hoped that the recent resolution, with the intervention of the Minister, will at last move us into a space where you begin to see the change that the profession deserves.

This backdrop has once again impacted on what would be the usual day-to-day workings of UTU as a member of NITC, and areas such as the regular Teachers' Negotiating Committee programme of work to review aspects of our Terms and Conditions of Service have been seriously impacted. This lack of progress is not something which can continue and it is imperative that all parties reflect on recent events and

move forward constructively towards positive outcomes in the coming year. Work has, however, continued on other levels. UTU has been engaging with employers in areas such as Assessment, Preventing Violence and the outworkings of change in the area of Special Educational Needs to name but a few. There has also been engagement and activity with teaching unions at UK and Ireland, European and international level on issues such as Artificial Intelligence and Early Years. UTU has further worked with employers and outside agencies in the areas of disability and bereavement and taken a range of issues to the Assembly Education Committee and Ministers including concerns around funding and governance.

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 and workload issues 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



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 INTRODUCTION	2
02 WORK OF THE UTU	4
03 NORTHERN IRELAND TEACHERS' COUNCIL	7
04 TEACHERS' NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE	9
05 REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES	10
06 OTHER MATTERS CONSIDERED BY CEC	13
07 LAW AND TENURE	14
08 NITPS SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD	16
09 IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS	18
10 ENGAGEMENT WITH EXTERNAL BODIES	20
11 UTU PARTNERS	23
12 BENEVOLENT FUNDS	24

13 JOINT SECRETARIES FORUM	25
14 TEACHER UNITY	26
15 CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	28
16 ATTENDANCE AT CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	29
17 SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	30
18 UTU REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL BODIES	31
19 HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS AND TRUSTEES	32
18 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 2024	33
19 THANKS AND APPRECIATION	34

WORK OF THE UTU

The following are reports from the Officials:

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT - Stephen McCord

Since my last report, the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) has remained steadfast in its commitment to securing fair pay for teachers. Building on the foundation laid in previous years, our campaign has maintained a strong focus on industrial action and advocacy. The restoration of Stormont last year provided a glimmer of hope for members awaiting a resolution to their long-standing pay dispute and we, alongside our colleagues were able to successfully achieve a well-deserved cost-of-living and pay increase. By December we were back to a position of balloting our members resulting in the commencement of industrial action in January past.

As a UTU representative at industrial action subgroup meetings of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC), I continue to work alongside fellow unions to navigate the potential cessation of action once the pay claim is satisfactorily addressed.

Beyond industrial action, our work in the UTU office has encompassed advising and representing members on a range of issues—from informal workplace concerns to formal contractual matters, disciplinary hearings, and investigations. Key victories for our members this year have included successful teaching allowance approvals, improvements in working conditions through flexible contracts, and enhanced time budgets that promote a healthier work-life balance.

Throughout the past year, I have had the privilege of engaging with members across all educational sectors—nursery, primary, post-primary, special, Exceptional Teaching Arrangements Service (ETA) and Education Authority (EA) Support Staff. The dedication and perseverance of our members in all sectors deserve immense recognition.

Challenges such as school closures and amalgamations due to area planning remain pressing concerns. These often lead to difficult and often upsetting conversations with staff facing uncertain futures. The impact of such closures can be devastating for both staff and the wider school community. UTU remains steadfast in supporting and advising members through these challenges.

Engagement with external partners has also been a priority, with ongoing collaboration with Cornmarket Insurance, Membership Plus, and Platinum Independent Financial Planning Ltd. Their continued support provides valuable benefits to our members, and I extend my gratitude to these organisations for their dedication to UTU members.

My role on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) has involved regular bi-monthly meetings and representation at key discussions. I attended the Workforce Review Planning Seminar, the DE/NITC Engagement Forum. I have also deputised for our General Secretary, Jackie White, at the Joint Secretaries Forum and represented UTU at the NITC Industrial Action Subcommittee.

This year, I have participated in a range of events, conferences, and meetings related to education, trade unionism, and policy discussions. I attended the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA) Conference, where key issues affecting secondary education in Scotland were explored. I also attended the TUI Conference in Killarney, Kerry, where a wide range of educational and industrial topics were discussed. Additionally, I engaged in several CCEA meetings, focusing on curriculum and assessment developments.

I took part in the May Day rally and march in Belfast, demonstrating solidarity with workers' rights, and attended IWMD 2024 at Stormont, marking International Workers' Memorial Day in remembrance of those who lost their lives at work.

Celebrating local educational milestones, I was present at Ballymena Primary School's 175th Anniversary Concert, recognising the school's long-standing contribution to the community. I also attended the INTO Vere Foster Annual Lecture, delivered by Professor Siobhan O'Neill, and the Stranmillis Annual Lecture, both of which provided valuable insights into education and school leadership.

My involvement in international and policy-focused discussions included participation in the International Relations Subcommittee, the INTO Children's Education Conference, and the Education International (EI) "Go Public" Zoom event, which emphasised the importance of public education.

On the union front, I also participated in the BIGTU North/South Education Forum, fostering collaboration between teaching trade unions across Ireland and have attended several meetings of the group. Furthermore, I was involved in regular NIC ICTU meetings regarding the Draft Employment Bill, addressing employment rights and protections. I also attended and proposed a motion to the Biannual Delegate Conference in Derry as well as being part of the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC). I have also attended the Ballymena and Antrim Trades Council Annual General Meeting.

I attended the Platinum Pre-Retirement Seminars at the Crowne Plaza, Killyhevin Hotel and Belmont House and attended some online webinars.

My engagement extended to sector-specific discussions, including the EA Joint Consultative Forum where valuable information was disseminated regarding Diabetes NI and Shared Education. I also represented UTU at the celebration of Sara Long's tenure at EANI, which acknowledged her contributions to education administration.

Finally, I took part in the OECD and EI webinar on AI and cheating in education, which explored safeguarding the integrity of exams in the digital age.

In addition to these events, I participated in several training initiatives and policy discussions to enhance professional development and support education sector improvements. I attended the "Safer Schools" Martyn's Law training day at NEU, which focused on school safety and preparedness. I also took part in a Gender Allyship session at the Labour Relations Agency Offices, which highlighted the importance of fostering inclusive workplaces.

Regarding our Joint INTO, NEU, UTU partnership I was re-elected as Secretary and over the past year we have been able to have two very successful School Leadership events in Armagh and Ballymena. We also jointly had a School Leaders Webinar on Time Budgets, addressing the challenges of managing workloads effectively. I also engaged in the Joint INTO, NEU, UTU Entitlement Leaver Webinar, ensuring clarity on rights and entitlements for educators transitioning out of the profession. We also engaged recently with our members regarding the ongoing pay dispute and had eight joint meetings across the Province.

WORK OF THE UTU

As part of a broader commitment to workplace safety and gender equality, I am in the process of completing the White Ribbon Organisation Programme, reinforcing advocacy against gender-based violence.

Beyond training and professional development, I was actively involved in political engagement to influence education and employment policies. I attended the NAHT Hustings event at the Stormont Hotel, engaging with policymakers on key issues affecting school leadership. I was also present at the Ministerial Launch of the "Good Jobs – Employment Rights Bill" at the Labour Relations Agency, which highlighted crucial legislative developments for workers' rights. Furthermore, I participated in our Joint Board meetings to discuss and publish General Election materials, ensuring that education and workers' issues remain central to the political discourse.

In addition, I continue to be the convenor for the ICT Subcommittee, overseeing discussions on digital learning and technological advancements at Headquarters.

Further responsibilities have included serving as Secretary to the CarrickAbbey and Larne Branch, where I attended four branch meetings, providing support and guidance to our local activists and members. Additionally, as Secretary to the North-Eastern Area Association, I have participated in meetings throughout the year.

My engagement in broader educational discussions also included attendance at ETUG Intercultural Meetings, which focused on fostering inclusivity within education, as well as participation in the Belfast City of Sanctuary discussion, which explored ways to make education more welcoming and supportive for refugee and migrant communities.

The past year has been marked by both challenges and achievements, and I am deeply grateful for the unwavering dedication of the UTU HQ team—Tony, Lindsay, Meriel, Denise, and Heather—whose commitment behind the scenes has been instrumental in supporting our members.

I also extend my appreciation to our officials, Rebekka and Joseph, for their invaluable advice and collaboration, ensuring that we continue to advocate effectively for UTU members.

Under the steadfast, calm, and resilient leadership of Jacquie White, we have successfully navigated an ever-evolving educational landscape over these twelve months while remaining firmly committed to protecting and improving the rights and well-being of our members. Their collective dedication and teamwork have been crucial in advancing our mission and strengthening the support we provide to UTU members. Caring for Teachers, Caring for Children.

FIELD OFFICER REPORT – Rebekka Gilpin

This year has started on positive terms, with the resolution of our previous pay dispute and settlement, which saw pay scales adjusted and members receiving back pay. A period of fairly stable industrial relations was welcomed, and work on other fronts was progressed.

Towards the end of the year, with a new pay claim submitted and an Education Minister in place, TUS and members were hoping for an easy resolution. However, negotiations stalled and members were balloted for ASOS and Strike action, resulting in an unprecedented turnout and votes in favour of both. ASOS commenced in January, and following the first pay offer from management side being rejected, members are currently voting on a revised pay offer.

As officials, a lot of our work since the ballot has been focused on answering queries and managing information sessions in relation to industrial action and the pay and workload offers. 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 continued to be involved in frequent meetings with the EA, CCEA, ETUG, CYPs, NITC and ICTU. I also had the opportunity to attend a TUAC meeting in Paris, alongside the General Secretary, which provided a very interesting insight into OECD research on education and responses from Trade Unions across the world. Furthermore, I sat on various LRA panels to represent TUS, a role I thoroughly enjoy.

Our termly consultation meetings with CYPs have been moved to monthly meetings, given that the SEND Transformation Programme

is still ongoing and members across the services and schools alike facing significant levels of uncertainty and change. TUS continue to express grave concerns regarding the timeline, implementation and consultation of SEND support services and the establishment of LITs. 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. Frequent delays in releasing information by CYPs has led to often poor working relationships and high levels of stress in some services in particular. I will continue to work alongside NITC colleagues to represent the voices of our members across the teaching workforce.

UTU's work with students has also continued, and we attended various recruitment events, hosted question and answer sessions with some of our Principals, and had meaningful engagement sessions with 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 reviewed and expanded our training courses for members, including the addition of extra webinars delivered by the representatives of the joint board. As every year, Platinum Financial, who provide excellent financial advice to our members interested in pensions or general financial planning, have hosted webinars and in person events, which proved to be very well attended and popular.

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

Reflecting on the past year, the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) has always continued to demonstrate unwavering dedication to their members. This started with a significant -3year pay deal being agreed soon after conference achieving comparative pay for teachers. Coincidentally, as we lead into this year's conference we find ourselves in deep negotiations once again over pay and workload.

WORK OF THE UTU

This year has seen a significant stride in enhancing Union Representative engagement. To facilitate ongoing communication and support, we have implemented regular drop-in Zoom sessions, allowing representatives to discuss challenges, share ideas, and receive guidance in a more accessible and flexible manner. The UTU have had a multitude of successes in the workplace following the collectivising/organisation of school groups. Engaging directly with members and union representatives during school visits has been especially rewarding, as it allows for face-to-face interactions that build strong connections, address concerns, and foster ongoing collaboration. We know that 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 have helped many school groups collectivise together to achieve better working conditions, resources and support where needed.

I have actively participated in numerous Representative Training sessions, particularly those centered on Health and Safety training. These sessions have been instrumental in equipping representatives with the necessary skills and knowledge to maintain safe and healthy environments in their respective areas.

In November 2024, I helped with the organising of the F.I.T. Conference, an event that brought together professionals and stakeholders to discuss key topics and share insights. My presentation focused on contractual rights and predominantly permanency. The whole conference fostered meaningful professional dialogue, allowing participants to gain new perspectives and practical knowledge. The conference also provided an excellent platform to showcase our work and connect with members from various sectors, contributing to the development of new ideas and approaches within our Union.

Our partnership with Stranmillis continues to thrive as we maintain a positive and dynamic relationship with the institution and predominantly Student Union body. We take pride in actively sponsoring several events (including the Annual Formal, Common room opening, Graduation Ball etc.) which not only demonstrate our commitment to the Stranmillis community, but also support the development of student initiatives. One such sponsorship is our support for the Running Club, which encourages health, fitness, and camaraderie among students. We donated branded running tops, which are a valuable resource for the Running Club but also great exposure for us as a Union.

Moreover, our efforts to recruit students at the ITT's have yielded positive outcomes, with a significant number of new members joining our ranks. We remain committed to welcoming more student members throughout the year, especially those who may not have been reached during Freshers fairs. As part of our outreach efforts with the ITT's, I have delivered tailored presentations to students at both Stranmillis and Queens University. These presentations have focused on practical topics such as contracts and time-budgets, aiming to empower students with essential knowledge as they transition into professional roles.

Equalities work remains a central commitment of the UTU, as we strive to ensure representation and inclusivity within our organisation and beyond. We have predominantly focused on our work with disabilities this year and have led the way in delivering tangible results for our members living with disabilities. Another key focus has been preparing for and representing at, the UTU's presence at Belfast Pride in July 2024. This involvement underscored our commitment to supporting diversity and celebrating the identities of all our members and the wider community.

Building on an intent from earlier this academic year, I am in the process of developing a strategic approach for branch meetings. This strategy includes creating a comprehensive calendar that outlines proposed meeting dates and suggested focal topics for discussion. By planning ahead, we aim to ensure that each meeting is purposeful, well-organised, and aligned with our overarching goals.

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

A significant portion of our casework has focused on addressing queries surrounding industrial action and the pay and workload proposals. At the same time, we have remained committed to supporting our members by managing cases related to sickness absences, disciplinary matters, grievances, and incidents of bullying and harassment, among other issues. The UTU continue to lead the way in supporting members with Shared Parental Leave (SPL) queries, which over the past year alone we have assisted members in saving over 800,000€ collectively by utilising this entitlement. In conclusion, of my report I wish to thank everyone for their help

and support in my role at the UTU. Specifically, Jacque White and Stephen McCord for their unfaltering leadership and Rebekka Gilpin for her continued support and advice, but also all the staff at the office who have kept me right. I look forward to meeting many more of the membership, faces new and old, at Annual Conference 2025.

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 for the current term are:

- **Chair:** Jacque 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 and Acting President, Lynelle Fenton, the President, Leigh McKay (April-August), the General Secretary, Jacque White and the Deputy General Secretary, Stephen McCord. Jon Bleakney, Jill Ravey and Louise Creelman, CEC, also represented UTU when required.

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 2024, meetings of NITC resumed on 22nd April.

PAY AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION

In June 2024, NITC put a pay claim to Management Side for a cost-of-living increase of 13.6% on all pay points for 2024-25. While the NITC settled the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 pay claims in good faith, recognising the financial situation at the time, the reality is that inflation over the three-year period was in excess of the average award to teachers and school leaders. From 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2024 the cumulative rate of inflation as per the ONS Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 21.1%. This is a shortfall of 8.3% for a teacher on UPS3. CPI Inflation at the end of March 2024 was 3.2%.

The NITC are committed to pay restoration and therefore submitted a claim for 13.6% which was based on the shortfall over the past three years and the current rate of inflation plus 2% to account for a move towards pay restoration.

During the summer 2024, teachers in England received a pay uplift of 5.5%. As of October, no offer had been made.

On 13 November 2024, UTU informed Management Side of the intention to ballot members for strike action and action short of strike from 25 November 2024 to 16 December 2024. The result of the ballot was communicated to Management Side on Tuesday 17th December 2024.

Management Side requested a four-week delay which was granted but the subsequent offer made on 31st January was not accepted by members and action short of strike action commenced.

In the intervening period, the constituent unions of NITC undertook intensive engagement with members and continued to meet regularly with management side to relay the concerns of members and negotiate further.

NITC subsequently received a revised pay offer which contained timeframes for delivery on a number of workload issues.

The Minister, Paul Givan, confirmed his commitment to delivering on workload for teachers by proposing an independent review panel to oversee the Heads of Agreement timeframes and to consider teacher workload more widely.

The offer was subsequently accepted by all unions and work will now begin on delivery.

OTHER ISSUES

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.

Martyn's Law

- SPiM classrooms, later becoming Special Provision, and the impact on schools and teachers
- Programme for Government and its implications for education
- PEPs for Children Looked After
- Sick pay for teachers
- Freedom of Information requests to schools
- Contracts in the support services
- After school activities
- Ill-health retirement processes
- Appropriate use of NISTR
- Guidelines around class size

NORTHERN IRELAND TEACHERS' COUNCIL

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.

- The End to End Review of the Curriculum
- The Review of Statutory Assessment
- CSSC Taskforce
- EDIS
- Outworkings of the RAISE project

NITC also met with the recently appointed Chief Executive of EA, Richard Pengelly, and discussed the role of EA within the TNC.

WORKING GROUPS

NITC is also represented on on-going working groups. These include:

- EA Preventing Violence at Work project
- Review of the Intercultural and Diversity Service
- Review of the workings of the Independent Appeal Hearings at the Labour Relations Agency

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.

- Assembly Education Committee Mini-Inquiry into RSE
- Consultation on Concussion Guidance
- Revised Circular on Teaching Qualifications
- TPL Framework and Learning Lens

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 Jacquie White, Chair of NITC.

The TNC is scheduled to meet quarterly but, at time of writing, last met in October 2024.

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

At the October meeting the following areas were considered:

- Teachers' Pay
- LRA Independent Appeal Process
- Workforce Review
- Programme of Work 2024 - 2025
- Communication
- Attendance Procedure
- Role of TNC

Discussion had commenced on improving the communication between TNC members and from TNC to the system. There was further initial consideration of the role of TNC in delivering real change for the teaching profession.

The subsequent pay negotiations overtook further work here.

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 intensive in recent months regarding the pay offer, the subsequent inability to accept and establishing a way forward.

At time of writing, a further offer from Management Side is expected.

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

TNC REVIEWS SUB-GROUP

Elements from the recommendations arising from the Workforce Reviews were included as part of the recent pay offer.

Following member engagement additional key asks have been relayed back to Management Side for consideration.

REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES - Lynelle Fenton, *Convenor*

The Finance and General Purposes Sub – Committee met regularly over the past year and are responsible for looking after the finances of the union – both the income and expenditure.

Large TV screens have been purchased for the HQ Boardroom to facilitate hybrid meetings and to enable documents to be shared during meetings.

There has been regular maintenance to the interior and exterior the UTU building.

Regular reviews of service providers have taken place and the respective contracts changed as necessary. It was ensured that the “Future in Teaching” group have the necessary support in order to develop this work.

We are grateful to Mr David Thompson who carries out the role of Honorary Treasurer. The Union are also fortunate to have Mrs Heather Arrell as our Financial Executive Officer who oversees the finances of the Union.

CONFERENCE - Lynelle Fenton, *Convenor*

The Conference Sub-Committee has met regularly over the past year to plan for Conference 2025. We trust that the Roe Park Resort and the plans that we have in place for Conference 2025 will provide a valuable, worthwhile, and enjoyable experience for delegates and guests. Delegates attending conference are now required to pay £50 (non-refundable) on registration to reserve their space.

We have a range of exhibitors and sponsors and are very grateful for their continued support.

EDUCATION AND POLICY - Janice Mullan, *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. The committee meets as and when required.

The Education and Policy Sub-Committee met to formulate and finalise the Union's response to the consultation by the Minister on the review of the Northern Ireland curriculum.

Views and opinions on the strengths and weaknesses were included from all sectors.

Teachers are the front line of education. It was emphasised that by involving local educators in the curriculum review process, we can ensure that the content is relevant, engaging, practical and reflects the diverse realities of the communities we serve. The need for a broad and balanced curriculum was stated to ensure that all students remain engaged and pursue pathways best suited to them. The response was submitted 31 January.

The convenor extends thanks and appreciation to the members of the committee for their enthusiastic commitment and readiness to share their expertise and experiences.

ICT SUB-COMMITTEE - Stephen McCord, *Convenor*

Over the past year, the ICT Sub-Committee has convened regularly to oversee and enhance the various technological aspects of UTU Headquarters. Our focus has encompassed hardware and software management, database administration, the mass emailing system, and the ever-evolving realm of social media—each playing a critical role in how we engage with and support our members.

In an era where digital communication is paramount, maintaining professional, secure, and efficient methods of interaction remains a top priority. UTU continues to have a strong presence across multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Threads, LinkTree, and YouTube. We have also now established a presence on BlueSky and are considering TikTok. Each of these channels are vital for disseminating information and fostering engagement with our members.

This year, the UTU website underwent key updates. Additionally, two moveable TV screens have been installed in the boardroom, significantly enhancing meeting capabilities by allowing documents to be projected and facilitating hybrid meetings for greater flexibility. As we go to press, we are examining in detail the ICT provider and considering options moving forward.

Our membership database continues to evolve, with ongoing refinements to improve efficiency and usability. One of the key challenges this year has been adapting to the extended Teacher Reference Numbers, but thanks to our robust system, we can efficiently sort and categorise members, including teachers, students, and retirees.

A special note of appreciation goes to Tony for his outstanding graphic design expertise, as well as to Meriel and Denise for their meticulous work in maintaining and overseeing the accuracy of our database. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to the sub-committee members for their valuable advice, guidance, and practical solutions throughout the year. Their contributions have been instrumental in ensuring that our ICT infrastructure remains secure, efficient, and responsive to the needs of our members.

REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES

ORGANISATION AND MEMBERSHIP - Rebekka Gilpin, *Convenor*

The Organisation and Membership sub-committee has met once since Conference 2024 to discuss membership related matters and to plan ahead for the new year. During the meeting in May, which was attended by CEC members and the UTU Officers, the focus was on reviewing membership rates and a scoping exercise was done to assess the current situation. It was agreed to bring subscription rates in line with comparators and the proposal was taken to the CEC.

Members of the sub-committee also discussed a proposal by the Organising Officer to increase communication across the branches and area associations, suggesting 3 scheduled meetings per year.

This is to be overseen by the President.

As in every year, the FIT group has played a major role in reaching out to our members at the beginning of their career. The Conference took place in November and further events are to be scheduled.

POLITICAL AND EQUALITY - Pauline Hurst, *Convenor*

The Political and Equality Subcommittee is dedicated to promoting equality and advocating for the rights of teachers, ensuring that all educators have equal opportunities and are treated fairly.

The committee is actively involved in developing and reviewing policies to guarantee inclusivity and equity for all teachers. Over the past year, they addressed the Domestic Abuse - Safe Leave consultation on behalf of our members and collaborated with the Health and Safety Subcommittee on our program focused on disability.

A significant development within the Education Authority (EA) was the creation of an Interim Policy and Procedure for the Redeployment of staff with disabilities. The committee dedicated time to refining this process to ensure it is effective for staff members.

Recently, the committee reviewed and provided a response statement regarding Stormont's Draft Disability Action Plan for 2025-2030.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the members of this subcommittee for their commitment, time, and contributions over the past year. Their efforts play a crucial role in fostering a fair and inclusive environment for all educators.

HEALTH AND SAFETY - Pauline Hurst, *Convenor*

The Health and Safety Sub-Committee devoted significant time and effort to creating a comprehensive response to the Stormont Education Committee's mini-inquiry on Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in schools.

In our collaborative efforts, we worked closely with colleagues from the Political and Equality Sub-Committee. This partnership allowed us to take a multidimensional approach while examining our ongoing program focused on disability.

We launched a series of surveys targeting our members to gather information on various critical areas, including mental health, physical disabilities, hidden disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, and issues related to menopause. Our goal was to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives to effectively inform our policies and practices as we move forward.

I would like to convey my appreciation to the members of this subcommittee for their dedication, efforts, and contributions throughout the past year.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY - Jacnice Mullan, *Convenor*

The International Relations and Global Solidarity Sub-Committee plays a vital role in raising awareness of education both locally and globally. This year, the sub-committee organised a Christmas competition, which received an outstanding number of entries from a wide range of schools. The enthusiasm and creativity displayed made it incredibly challenging for our judging panel to select the winners.

Our Vice-President had the privilege of visiting many of the winning schools to personally present prizes, celebrating the talents and efforts of the pupils. We deeply appreciate the dedication of teachers who inspire and encourage their students to take part in these competitions.

In addition to our engagement with schools, we remain committed to supporting both local and international charities. This year, UTU proudly donated a total of £3,800 to educational charities, helping to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children around the world. We trust that these contributions will support vital educational initiatives and create lasting opportunities for young learners.

REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES

RULES AND CONSTITUTION – Jacquie White, *Convenor*

The sub-committee met on one occasion this year and discussed changes to the Rules and Constitution. Several amendments and additions were suggested and taken to the Central Executive Committee for discussion and will now be brought to Delegates to decide at Conference 2025. We also considered whether there is a need to make an amendment to our Disciplinary Code, no requirement was necessary.

EDITORIAL - Janice Mullan, *Convenor*

A copy of UTU News was emailed to all members in October 2024, and as we go to press, the Spring 2025 edition is about to be published. Following a period of consultation, we have decided to rebrand our magazine, which will now be known as SHOUT UNION. We believe this new title better reflects the spirit of UTU and will make our publication even more engaging for members. While the name has changed, the format will remain familiar and will continue to be electronic with hyperlinks embedded.

We actively encourage members to contribute to SHOUT UNION by submitting photographs and articles for publication. Our members insights and experiences help shape a magazine that truly represents our union. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the businesses that support us through advertising, ensuring the continued success of our publication.

A special thank you must go to the exceptionally talented Tony McCabe, whose keen artistic eye and attention to detail bring our magazine to life. His work in setting photographs and text ensures that each edition is both visually appealing and a pleasure to read.

PROPERTY - Janice Mullan, *Convenor*

The Property Sub-Committee convenes as necessary to oversee the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of our Headquarters building, including its interior fixtures, fittings, and surrounding grounds.

As a union, we are privileged to occupy such a distinguished building in the suburbs of Belfast. This year, general maintenance included the replacement of a pump in the boiler system and repairs to toilet cisterns. Our tenant, Thornton Tomasetti Warrington Ltd, continues to occupy the top floor of the building, and we are pleased to report that they remain excellent tenants.

We have recently appointed a new gardener responsible for maintaining the garden and lawns around the building. In October, extensive pruning of the trees and hedges at the front of the property was undertaken. Broadleaf Tree Services, with whom the union has a long-standing professional relationship, carried out this work to an exceptionally high standard. We appreciate the cooperation of our neighbour, who kindly granted access to their garden to facilitate the pruning.

Storm Éowyn brought significant disruption, resulting in the loss of a mature beech tree. Fortunately, the tree did not fall onto the building or neighbouring properties. While the road was partially obstructed for a period, Broadleaf Tree Services responded swiftly and efficiently, clearing the road and removing the fallen tree and debris.

OTHER MATTERS CONSIDERED BY CEC

- Steve Sinnott Foundation – Gift of Cycling to School
- Ballymena and Antrim Trades Council
- Fermanagh Trades Council
- Omagh Trades Council
- Belfast Football Association
- Workers' Memorial Day
- Marie Curie schools' bereavement education
- EA Information Governance – Freedom of Information requests
- GTCNI - Board Effectiveness Review
- Churches in Ireland – 30 Years of Peace
- Breast Cancer Awareness
- LRA panel on the impact of Domestic Abuse
- Domestic Abuse/Safe leave
- Response to the Programme of Government
- RSE mini-inquiry
- Good Jobs Employment Bill
- UTU International Relations Christmas Competition
- Branch and Area Association matters
- Belfast Schools' Football
- Staff Welfare

LAW AND TENURE

The UTU Officials have had an exceptionally active year, handling a significant volume of casework. Reports are presented to the Central Executive Committee each month. While confidentiality and GDPR considerations prevent the sharing of individual cases, this report will highlight the key themes and emerging trends in casework handled by Officials over the past year.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Since the April 2024 pay deal was secured, we have worked closely with our colleagues in NITC to support members transitioning out of industrial action. In several cases, members were asked to provide evidence of work covered under ASOS. Despite pressure from line managers, principals, and Boards of Governors, we provided steadfast support, ensuring members understood their rights and reinforcing the legal legitimacy of our industrial action. The industrial action initially scheduled for January 2025 presented challenges for some of our members. During the four-week pause, agreed upon to facilitate good-faith negotiations with management, a small number of school leaders attempted to impose changes to work patterns, reschedule agreed meetings, or bring forward parental meetings within this period. We commend our members for standing firm and addressing these attempts to circumvent the agreed pause, ensuring the integrity of our collective action was upheld.

GOVERNANCE

UTU continues to support both teacher and principal members facing a wide range of challenges related to school governance. In some cases, agreed TNC documents are not being followed, and there have been instances where Chairs of Boards of Governors have delayed or neglected their responsibilities. We are particularly concerned about the length of time certain procedures are taking. While we acknowledge and appreciate that Board of Governors members are volunteers who generously give their time to schools, we urge them to commit to agreed, reasonable timeframes and to uphold their duties in line with equality legislation.

ATTACKS ON STAFF FROM PUPILS AND PARENTS

There has been a significant and concerning rise in the number of UTU members seeking support following incidents of physical assault by pupils and/or abusive behaviour from parents. Over the past year, several members have required both medical treatment and PSNI intervention due to serious incidents. Despite the existence of clear policies and guidance, there is a troubling lack of understanding, support, and appropriate action from some schools. Alarmingly,

in a number of severe cases, impacted teachers were expected to continue their teaching duties immediately after an incident. UTU is actively working to ensure that such incidents are formally recorded in line with procedures already in place for support staff. This data collection will provide a robust evidence base for reporting to the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) and advocating for stronger protections and support for teachers. Notably, these reporting mechanisms should have

been established since 2014 but remain absent in many cases. UTU is committed to addressing this issue as a matter of urgency.

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES IN SCHOOL

UTU officials continue to address a range of workplace relationship issues within schools. These concerns extend beyond interactions between governors and staff to include relationships between teachers and school leaders, among teaching staff, and between teachers and support staff.

Over the past year, numerous allegations of shocking and unacceptable behaviour have been reported, further underscoring the inadequacy of the current policy framework—specifically TNC 2009/11—which is no longer fit for purpose. UTU remains engaged with employers in reviewing this document to ensure it meets the needs of the profession.

These issues vary in scale, ranging from individual disputes between staff members to cases where an entire teaching staff raises concerns about bullying by a specific individual. As cases must be raised separately, this has led to multiple concurrent cases within single schools. Unfortunately, such situations are becoming increasingly prevalent. UTU is actively advocating for a robust and transparent process from the Education Authority (EA) to address governance and management behaviour effectively.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

UTU officials regularly handle sickness and attendance-related issues, including misinformation surrounding sick pay, agreed policies on paid leave, return-to-work procedures, and expectations regarding remote work to ensure class continuity. UTU is committed to providing prompt and efficient support to members, offering reassurance and guidance where needed. This year, officials have attended numerous meetings to assist members on, or returning from, long-term sickness absence. Workplace stress remains a significant concern, with many members affected. Additionally, UTU has supported members through the Termination of Contract process due to prolonged illness or an inability to maintain regular attendance.

DISABILITY

Through our programme of work and awareness campaigns over the past year, an increasing number of members with disabilities now feel confident in coming forward to seek support. Our member survey also highlights that many teachers face a range of challenges while remaining deeply committed to their pupils and the profession. For those requiring support, UTU officials have played a key role in securing reasonable adjustments, including modifications to working practices, specialist equipment, and expert guidance. The Department for Communities has been supportive in ensuring these adjustments are properly recorded and communicated to schools. Pauline Hurst, UTU's Disability Champion, has been instrumental in raising awareness and guiding members through the

LAW AND TENURE

process to access the support they need. Those stepping forward now are helping to pave the way for future members who may require similar assistance.

SALARIES AND CONTRACT ISSUES

While schools continue to face increasing budget pressures, this cannot be used to justify denying teachers their salary progression and contractual entitlements. UTU officials have supported members who have been denied salary scale progression—some for several years—often being told that budget constraints prevent the increases. Additionally, some members have been asked to take on additional responsibilities or combine Teaching Allowances without appropriate remuneration. UTU remains concerned about the lack of proper governor review of Teaching Allowances and has successfully challenged salary policies where teachers were not being fairly compensated for their work. Although Directed Time Budgets are now in place in most schools, issues persist for some members.

Alongside NITC colleagues, UTU continues to raise concerns over the discrepancies in terms and conditions for members employed within EA Support Services. Multiple cases have been lodged regarding the incorrect payment of SEN allowances, and we remain frustrated by the stalled review of SEN. The SEND Transformation Programme also remains a significant concern, and despite increased trade union consultation, there has been little meaningful progress in recent months.

LEGAL CASES

UTU maintains a long-standing partnership with the solicitors of Shean-Dickson-Merrick, providing expert legal support to members. Allegations related to child protection often meet the threshold for PSNI investigation, and this year saw a significant increase in such cases. UTU officials, alongside the Union Solicitor, have attended multiple PSNI interviews under caution to support members facing these allegations. While many cases do not progress legally and are referred back to schools for internal investigation, UTU continues to represent and support members throughout these processes. In some instances, cases have advanced further, with settlements reached before formal hearings or the case going to magistrates court. UTU extends its appreciation to its officials, whose dedication and commitment ensure that every member receives fair and appropriate representation.

NITPS SCHEME **ADVISORY BOARD**

UTU is represented on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme Advisory Board (NITPSSAB) by the General Secretary; Jacquie White and Joseph Wyglendacz; Organising Officer.

Meetings took place on 18th June 2024, 8th October 2024 and 4th February 2025. These meetings alternate between physical meetings in the UTU HQ and online via TEAMS.

The SAB meetings dealt with the following:

PENSION APPLICATIONS

Going forward, pension applications will require four months' notice, an increase from the previous three-month processing time.

Between April and December 2024, there were significant delays in processing pensions for scheme members. A total of 520 pension applications were submitted for summer 2024 retirements. By August 2024, 372 had been processed and paid. By October 2024, 440 applications had been processed, leaving 80 pension payments delayed beyond the expected four-month timeframe outlined in the pension application forms and guidance.

The UTU raised concerns regarding these delays through the Pension Scheme Advisory Board. The issues stemmed from significant staffing shortages at TPPT. UTU officials have made representations on behalf of affected members.

PENSION PORTAL

A new online portal for Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme members is now available to all members. This is the final phase of the replacement Teachers' Pension System. Registrations for the Pension Portal have been positive with over 17,000 scheme members now online.

This is where teacher members will be able to: view and print Annual Benefit Statements (ABS), nominate and update their beneficiary, update their log-in and personal details and send queries to the Teachers' Pension Team via a messaging facility.

Details on how to register and access the Teachers' Pension Online portal are available from the 'Teaching Staff - Pension Scheme' section of the DE website.

OPT-OUT STATISTICS

The number of teachers opting out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland remains low, with no noticeable trends or concerns.

The primary reason for opting out is auto-enrolment, while other teachers cite financial or contractual reasons for their decision.

SCHEME VALUATION

The results of the 2020 actuarial valuation of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) have been published on the Department of Education's website. The three reports forming the official NITPS actuarial valuation are also available on the DE website.

The final valuation confirms that the employer contribution rate is 29.1%, effective from 1 April 2024, due to changes in the SCAPE discount rate. HM Treasury has agreed to fund any increases in employer contributions resulting from this change, with proportional funding provided through the Barnett consequential process for devolved administrations. Confirmation of how the funding mechanism will work is still pending from HMT and the Department of Finance.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTION RATES 2024/25

The Department of Education (DE) has published a draft Statutory Rule titled the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 for consultation.

The consultation, which ran for 8 weeks beginning 18 December 2024, proposed amendments to the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 to slightly adjust the member contribution tiers. These changes aim to ensure the 9.6% contribution yield is met, as required by law. The preferred option was to increase all but the lowest contribution tier by a multiple of 1.031, leaving the lowest tier unchanged. These adjustments apply to all members, effective from 1 April 2025.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTION RATE: 1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026

ANNUAL SALARY BANDS*	MEMBER CONTRIBUTION RATE
Up to £34,289.99	7.40%
£34,290.00 - £46,158.99	8.87%
£46,159.00 - £54,729.99	9.90%
£54,730.00 - £72,534.99	10.52%
£72,535.00 - £98,908.99	11.65%
£98,909.00 and above	12.06%

*These salary bands will be updated annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
Annual Pension Increase

NITPS SCHEME **ADVISORY BOARD**

Pension increases are applied on the first Monday after 6 April each year. The increase for 2023 was 6.7%, effective from 6 April 2024. The increase is based on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for the year up to the preceding September.

LEGISLATION - MCCLLOUD

The McCloud ruling refers to the Court of Appeal's decision that the Government's 2015 public sector pension reforms unlawfully treated public sector workers differently based on their age between April 2015 and April 2022.

To address this, the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) introduced a 'deferred choice underpin,' allowing members to choose how their service is treated during the remedy period when they access their pension—either under the legacy or Career Average (CARE) scheme.

All relevant legislation is now in place, and affected members will receive a letter with guidance, an updated benefits statement, and a final choice form upon submitting their pension application.

GOODWIN

The Goodwin case ruled that male survivors of opposite-sex marriages and civil partnerships were treated less favourably than survivors in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships. Scheme rules will be amended to ensure that male spouses or civil partners of female members are treated equally to same-sex spouses or civil partners. Survivor benefits will now be calculated based on service from 1 April 1972 (or 6 April 1978 for those whose marriage or civil partnership occurred after their last day of pensionable service).

This change applies to deaths of female members from 5 December 2005, the date when same-sex civil partnerships were introduced. The Department of Education will review applications for priority cases in the meantime.

PENSIONS DASHBOARD

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has set a connection deadline of 31 October 2025 for public service pension schemes, including NITPS. Work continues in line with TPR guidance and the delayed launch of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Pensions Dashboards. The final connection deadline is set for 31 October 2026.

The Pensions Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations 2023 require pension schemes to provide individuals with secure online access to their pension information, including details of multiple pension savings, such as the State Pension.

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 and UTU is represented by Jacquie White.

ICTU and NIC/ICTU hold conferences in alternate years but, due to the pandemic, are only beginning to move back into the regular cycle.

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 Jacquie White of UTU.

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

In her role as Chair, Jacquie White has represented NIC at meetings with both Finance Ministers, has met with the Secretary of State and has presented evidence to the Assembly Economy Committee. She also spoke to launch the NIC/ICTU Neurodiversity Guide at the Union Learning Conference held in The Mac theatre.

NIC/ICTU BIENNIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE (BDC)

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/ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference took place in The Guild Hall, Derry on the 13th and 14th July 2024. UTU delegates at the BDC were: Lynelle Fenton, President, Janice Mullan, Vice-President, Pauline Hurst (UTU Disability Champion), Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary, Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer, and Jacquie White, General Secretary.

UTU brought the following motion to the BDC:

FREEDOM FROM INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT

The TNC 2023/2 Joint Declaration of Protection (for Dignity at Work & Inclusive Working Environment) contains the following commitments: This Declaration is a joint Management Side and Teachers' Side

agreement which recognises the moral and legal duties placed on Employers and Trade Unions as a result of fair employment legislation, anti-discrimination law and the Section 75 Statutory Equality Duty. This agreement aims to provide a work environment that fosters the dignity of its employees, is inclusive and where individual differences are valued and respected. This Joint Declaration Statement applies to all employees including staff contracted to work in schools to assist in the day to day running of the school.

Declaration

1. The Employing Authorities, Board of Governors and Teachers' Side declare that they condemn all acts of unlawful discrimination and harassment and that they are committed to ensuring that any acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment carried out will be vigorously opposed by both Management Side and the Teachers' Side.

2. The Employing Authorities, Board of Governors and Teachers' Side affirm that every employee has the right to work free from intimidation and harassment on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion, sex, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, race, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Action

This declaration will be prominently displayed in the school and made available to all staff and will be made available on the Education Authority website.

Despite this Joint Declaration of Protection being reaffirmed and reissued in 2023, education workers continue to be subjected to abuse and harassment on equality grounds, ranging from persistent, 'low level' bullying behaviour to systematic campaigns of abuse.

The Joint Declaration is neither displayed nor observed in the majority of schools and education workers continue to experience unacceptable and, at times extreme, harassment, intimidation and discrimination both within and from outside the school setting.

Congress, therefore, calls upon NIC/ ICTU to support the education workers in a campaign to ensure that:

The Declaration is displayed in schools as agreed, and measures are taken to raise awareness of workers and school communities regarding its implications

Significant protections are introduced to the education sector, as exist in other sectors, promoting zero tolerance of abuse
Robust accountability measures are established and implemented at all levels to respond appropriately to such behaviour wherever and whenever it occurs.

Rebekka Gilpin proposed the motion seconded by Stephen McCord.

DISABILITY

It is the contention of Conference that the legislation in NI around rights of workers with a disability and the responsibilities of employers has been well defined and well established for a considerable number of years.

Conference, therefore, has grave concerns about the marked lack of knowledge, process and procedure in relation to dealing with teachers' disability within both the school context and, indeed, the wider education system.

Conference calls on the employing authorities to ensure that all employers are fully aware of their responsibilities in this area under the legislation and that clear processes and appropriate funding are in place, both at school and system level, to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be provided where needed to allow teachers with a disability to remain in employment with the support and dignity which they deserve – and to which they are entitled.

The motion was proposed by Pauline Hurst, seconded by Janice Mullan and supported by colleagues from INTO.

Stephen McCord, Lynelle Fenton and Rebekka Gilpin spoke to support motions from affiliate unions.

The election for the new NIC/ICTU Committee was held during the Congress and Jacquie White subsequently took up the position of Chair for the next term.

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.

The Committees are currently being reconstituted and UTU were represented by the following members and Officials this year.

ICTU WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Leigh McKay, President
Lynelle Fenton, Acting 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

IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

ICTU EDUCATION TRADE UNION GROUP

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Jacquie White, General Secretary
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer
Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer

ICTU LGBT COMMITTEE

Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer
Leigh McKay, President

ICTU ETHNIC MINORITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Jacquie White, General Secretary

ICTU DISABILITY COMMITTEE

Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer
Pauline Hurst, UTU Disability Champion

ICTU GLOBAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer

EDUCATION TRADE UNION GROUP (ETUG)

The NIC-ICTU ETUG group is compiled of most of the teaching Unions and all support staff Unions: Ulster Teachers' Union, INTO, NASUWT, NAHT, NIPSA, UNISON, GMB and Unite the Union. The positions of Chair and Vice-Chair are currently being determined following reconstitution. The UTU's key delegates to ETUG are Rebekka Gilpin, UTU Official and Joseph Wyglendacz, UTU Official, with others contributing as appropriate. The group is convened by John O'Farrell, NIC-ICTU Official.

Coordinating industrial action has been the major work stream for ETUG over the past year in the attempt to achieve the largest impact for enforcing movement at a political level. The key success for the Education sector was the largest coordinated strike action of a lifetime - the 15 ICTU Union-wide strike on Thursday 18th January. Leading up to this culmination was significant background work between teaching Unions and support staff Unions with regular meetings to update each other on ASOS and industrial action approaches. The UTU continues to work closely with all the ETUG Unions as we move towards a reduction in industrial action pending a pay deal.

The ETUG and wider NIC-ICTU have routinely constructed press releases on a number of joint issues. These have included, but are not limited to: NI Trade Unions continue pursuit for fair wages, investment in services and a fairer financial arrangement for Northern Ireland, Minister's statement on Sustainable Investment in Education Infrastructure, Department publishes response to the Relationships and Sexuality Education Consultation, Climate Coalition NI press release re COP28, and SEN funding.

Political lobbying has been a key focus for the group over the past 18 months, with a coordinated strategy of targeting MLAs, Councillors and MPs to raise the profile/keep education in the forefront of political discussions and prominence. The approach was to hold meetings with local politicians, with both teaching and support staff side unions present, to share the concerns affecting the education sector as a whole. The meetings were very useful in not only educating the politicians on the current educational landscape, but also beneficial in opening up channels of communication/building relationships where they had previously waned. It was reassuring to hear the commitment to education from the breadth of the political spectrum, which is something ETUG aims to maintain going forward.

A large piece of work surrounded the DENI RSE Consultation response. ETUG members all shared their concerns surrounding the misinformation campaign that surrounded the consultation and Unions respectively issued guidance to their members. The Unions of ETUG were in agreement in their position regarding RSE, but the UTU specifically wanted to retain teachers' professional autonomy on specific issues. What has seemingly been a divisive issue has unfortunately lost its main aims within the cacophony of discord.

Recently we have engaged with important policy work, due to the reconstitution of the Education Committee at Stormont. ETUG have been in touch with the clerk of the committee and have notified them of our intention to offer an oral briefing at an early stage (following the representation of NITC on the 21st of Feb). ETUG Unions will prepare a brief note in advance to highlight policy priorities ahead of selecting a representative delegation to brief each committee in person. Ideally, our policy priorities will be based on motions passed at Congress BDCs. Funding, as ever, has been a standing agenda item at ETUG. The key areas surrounding funding have centred on the ongoing SEND transformation plan and the implementation of the proposed structure. This has a significant impact on our members, both contractually and workload related, so a joined-up approach across the Unions will be paramount in pushing back on detrimental changes in the sector. SEND concerns will likely be the most significant policy proposal to the Education Committee in the first instance.

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 Tina Creaney of NIPSA with Una O'Farrell of PDA being Vice-Chair. The committee is supported by Clare Moore, Equality Officer for NIC/ICTU, and UTU was represented this year by Jacquie White, GS, and Lynelle Fenton, Acting President and Leigh McKay, 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.

Issues considered this year have included the progress of the *DOMESTIC ABUSE (SAFE LEAVE) ACT (NI) 2022 CONSULTATION* and a range of on-going projects to address Violence against Women and Girls.

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 23-24 January 2025 at The Ebrington Hotel, Derry.

David Carroll from ICTU presented his work on a project on anti-extremism. Further, Danielle McCusker presented the work of the ICTU Education Trade Union Group which looked at how this project may be used to best use in schools and communities.

The event was attended by Janice Mullan and Alison Steen. Unfortunately, a storm cut the event short but it was, nonetheless, informative, stimulating and thought-provoking.

ICTU WOMEN'S SEMINAR

The ICTU Women's Seminar took place on 20th and 21st March 2025 at The Fairways Hotel, Dundalk. The event was timed to occur close to International Women's Day whilst creating the space for the committee members to attend other IWD events.

The seminar was jointly chaired by Tina Creaney and Margaret Coughlan, representing the Committees North and South.

Jacquie White, as Chair of NIC/ICTU, opened the event and topics addressed included tackling the rise of the far right in our workplaces, trade unions and communities and addressing the role of pornography in the pandemic of violence against women and girls.

Contributions were made by Kudsia Batool, TUC Head of Equalities, Aaksanksha Surve, ICTU Black Leadership Programme, Patricia McKeown from UNISON and Ruth Breslin from The Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute. David Carroll who has developed a programme in ICTU to address racism was also a key contributor.

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

RALLIES

UTU also joined affiliates from ICTU at the May Day Rally, Reclaim the Night and Pride.

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 ETI/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.

Regular meetings between ETI and NITC continued in 2024. Following the cessation of industrial action in the summer term, pilot inspections took place in volunteer schools. Formal inspections resumed in September 2024, with over 100 inspections taking place before 31 December 2024. Despite initial concerns about a return to inspections most members found the new inspection process to be a reformed process, with more focus on the learners and how they are learning than on data and paperwork. Regular meetings between ETI and NITC continue.

In May 2024, ETI published their New Framework for Inspection which was informed by, and co-designed with, schools and organisations, resulting in a new inspection process underpinned by a revised vision and mission. It was updated in September 2024 following a number of pilot inspections in May and June after the cessation of industrial action in April 2024. The document details the key changes to the inspection process and will be kept under ongoing review across the first year of implementation.

ETI has been engaging with schools at all levels and has produced a number of Phase Insight Reports during 2024 and these are available on the ETI website. The following is a brief summary of the findings.

The *ETI Pre-school Phase Insights Report*, published in October detailed many strengths in which have been rightly celebrated in the settings, but acknowledged past and current challenges. However, this report outlines that collaboration at all levels not only enables challenges to be overcome, but also empowers staff to try new ways of working which are important to ongoing evaluation and improvement.

The *ETI Primary (including EOTAS) Phase Insights Report* also issued in October 2024 with the key findings reflecting the importance of the impact of digital technology on pedagogy, communication between schools and parents, and raising children's understanding of anxiety and developing their resilience to support their social, behavioural, and emotional wellbeing (SBEW) needs as priorities. In all primary schools where there was a follow-up inspection, improvement was evident in the quality of education provision. Challenges identified included the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic including lower attendance rates, industrial action and a need to leap forward in terms of school improvement. It was noted that timely interventions and a highly skilled workforce are key to unlocking the full potential of all children, including the rising number of children with complex special educational needs (SEN) and this was balanced against a growing number of school leaders expressing concerns about their own emotional health and wellbeing and that of their staff.

The *ETI Post-primary Insights Report* was also published in October 2024 and found the following: effective leadership and communication are crucial to the development of a culture of continuous improvement; schools continue to develop creative and innovative approaches for living and working in today's evolving technological landscape; schools value cross-departmental working and support to meet pupils' needs effectively. Again, schools where inspection had previously identified areas for action had shown improvement. Identified challenges included the need for schools to be supported to deliver a quality curriculum for all; the requirement for better access to professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of all pupils; concerns around pupil absence and the urgent need for flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of pupils arriving in Northern Ireland from other places.

ETI EVALUATIONS

ETI also reviewed a number of areas of work and published the following evaluations.

An Evaluation of Mutual Understanding in Primary Schools published in February 2024.

An Evaluation of the Digital Skills Provision in Education: this work was based on two evaluations undertaken in this area during 2023:

'Future Ready Digital Learning: the impact of teachers' devices on education provision', and,

'A baseline evaluation of the digital skills provision in primary and post-primary schools'.

The purpose of the work was to review and share effective practice and the reports concluded that to optimise the potential benefits of digital technologies in education, DE should continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders to develop and implement an agreed system-wide digital skills strategy for education. The report was published in April 2024.

ETI published two further reports on Special Educational Needs which were launched in November 2024.

The first – *'Specialist Provisions in Mainstream Schools - Part 1'* – examined the effectiveness of the arrangements, and the quality of the provision, for the growing number of pupils in specialist provision in mainstream schools (SPiMS) classes. ETI found that, overall, staff in primary and post-primary schools, with the support of EA SSST and their counterparts in special schools, have worked tirelessly to provide high quality learning experiences for the pupils being placed in SPiMS classes. In a significant minority of the schools, it was deemed that pupils would benefit from appropriate and planned opportunities to work alongside their peers in the mainstream classes, particularly as they progress up through the school. In a small number of instances, due in the main to a lack of access to the services of allied health professionals, it was found that the pupils' needs may have been better met in a special school setting.

The second report – *'The Statutory Assessment (Statementing) Process'* – explored whether the current process of statutory assessment, or 'statementing', for children who may be presenting with special educational needs is meeting the needs of those children and focused on the practicalities of the statutory assessment and review process and on issues relating to the

ENGAGEMENT WITH EXTERNAL BODIES

implementation of educational statements. ETI found that the evidence from this evaluation highlighted critical deficiencies in the Statutory Assessment (Statementing) process for learners with SEN. The current arrangements are not identifying and assessing the needs of all learners with SEN in a timely way, the process is overly bureaucratic, and it is not focused sufficiently on getting to the specifics of how education can be adapted to meet the educational needs of the learners. In short, the current process is not working effectively enough in meeting the needs of learners with SEN.

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 facilitate presentations and discussions, and share information on current activity.

The Forum is chaired by Aileen Donnelly, Head of Equality & Diversity Unit, EA.

Topics have included:

- Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) - Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMs) - Expediency or Inclusion?
- The Executive Office - The Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework – There is something everyone can do.
- Follow-up to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
- Investigation into Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) in Post-Primary Schools in NI: assessment of progress against recommendations
- Education Authority - Update from Intercultural Education Services: Overview of IES work supporting Asylum Seeker/ Refugee (including Afghan & Ukrainian), Newcomer, Roma and Traveller pupils
- Nexus- Early Intervention & Prevention Services work

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 (including savings and sustainability)
- HR Contact Model/Helpdesk
- Annual Teaching Recruitment Report
- EA People Plan
- Pre School Standardisation Programme
- SEND Transformation - LITs implementation January 2025
- SEN Placements
- Planning & Engagement for September 2025
- The EA approach to, and systems for, dealing with EA employees in schools with regard to employment and the Section 75 equality grounds.

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:

- Updates from Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)
- Deirdre Grant from SBNI on Child Criminal Exploitation
- Launch of Domestic Violence Strategy in Northern Ireland
- ETI Proforma
- Pupil Well Being Protection Division in Schools Leadership
- Workstream Network
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Updates from Child Protection Support Service
- Safer Resourcing Update
- Children in Entertainment & Employment Team
- Overview of Child Protection Support Service Annual Report

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.

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. As of 2024, Dale Hanna is the new Director of CYPS.

Quarterly CYPS/ Teacher Trade Union Consultation meetings took place throughout the year and, on request of TUS representatives, more regular engagement meetings took place to discuss the SEND Transformation Process.

Following issues raised by TUS, the implementation of the SEND Transformation programme was delayed initially to January 2025 and then to September 2025. Among the concerns raised were that sufficient time had not been given to consult with the support services on the proposed changes. While the EA prepares to move to the LIT model in 2025, children, young people and schools, were still able to access Support Services while work continued to establish the local teams and Regional Management Unit. During this period there were some changes to the support offered, which focussed on prioritising the current waiting lists and clearing as much of these as possible before implementation of the new local team's model, with direct referral only being for children with the most significant and complex needs/ The Graduated Response Framework came into operation as of March, with training to SENCos and schools delivered in February and March. The allocation of staff to LITs, as well as the areas they will cover, is due to be confirmed by the end of March. UTU, alongside colleagues from INTO, NEU, NASUWT and NAHT, continue to engage with members in joint teams meetings to alleviate concerns and provide support throughout this process.

Further work TUS has been involved in was the support to members in the EA Support Services with regard to permanency rights. This has been successful, with contracts issues in December 2024. Time budgets remain an area of concern, in particular in light of the SEND Transformation Programme, and engagement with CYPS is continuing in that regard.

For the past 2 years, SEN allowances have been a topic of discussion and challenges between CYPS and TUS. The EA SEN Scoping exercise was completed in 2023, providing an overall picture in terms of teachers and SEN allowances within a defined time period including teachers engaged through NISTR on a temporary basis. In parallel to this work, Management considered it was important to develop a Salary Policy for teachers in special

ENGAGEMENT WITH EXTERNAL BODIES

schools, specialist provisions in mainstream schools and EA Services, that will set out the principles to guide all pay decisions in these settings with objectivity, transparency and consistency whilst at the same time reflecting the needs and circumstances of individual schools and settings. The initial focus of Salary Policy development is on the SEN allowances aspect given the current issues. EA commenced the formal engagement with the Teacher Unions on the SEN allowances salary policy proposals in May 2024. The Teacher unions responded highlighting a number of issues but to date no further information has been received.

Another major topic of discussion continues to be the placement of pupils with SEN, the majority of which were placed by September 2024. The aim is to have a strategic area plan for the next 10 years. EA created over 1450 places to meet the needs of Children with SEND and have started to build this capacity for Sept 25 and beyond. With the need continuing to increase, more work has to be done for 25/26.

As a result of the continuing and growing need to place pupils with SEN, specialist provision classes in mainstreams (SPiMs) were introduced. It is estimated that between 2024-26, there will be a need for a further 958 specialist provision places - 678 primary schools places and 280 post primary school places. This equates to the provision of at least 80 additional classes. While there is some capacity in the current primary and post primary estate, the increase in demand will require additional accommodation to be provided at an additional cost.

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.

CCEA MEETING UPDATE

EA Preventing Violence at Work

The group established by EA to deal with the issue of preventing violence at work continues to work on strategies to prevent violence and abuse in schools. 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 continues to seek clarification on the mechanism through which it will be applicable to all teachers.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The Assembly Education Committee is currently chaired by Nick Mathison of Alliance and has invited engagement from UTU and NITC this year.

UTU was invited to contribute to the Committee's mini-inquiry into relationship and sexuality education (RSE) in October 2024.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee were to compare the approaches to and outcomes of RSE in these islands and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) internationally: to assess provision in NI; and to consider whether there is a need for reform and make conclusions, recommendations or note themes accordingly.

Comment was invited on the following:

- Curriculum Integration and Content
- Policy Implementation and School Compliance
- Resources and Support for RSE
- Teacher Training and External Providers
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusivity
- Legislative and Rights-Based Considerations
- Impact of Withdrawal Policies
- Violence against Women and Girls

UTU submitted a response accordingly.

UTU PARTNERS

Mandi Millar

Since our last conference report UTU maintained a strong and consistent media presence, thanks to the invaluable support of Mandi Millar, who played a key role in ensuring the union's voice was regularly heard across various platforms. Mandi continued to work closely with UTU to represent our interests in local and regional media, ensuring that our perspectives were reflected in important educational debates and discussions. This year, General Secretary Jacquie White and Deputy General Secretary Stephen McCord further enhanced our visibility by contributing to discussions on a range of radio stations, including Radio Ulster, Radio Foyle, U105, Downtown, and Cool FM. Our representation also extended to television with notable coverage on BBC Newsline, BBC Sunday Politics and UTV lunchtime and evening news reports. Mandi's dedication and tireless efforts have been vital in keeping UTU at the forefront of educational discourse throughout the year. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks for her ongoing commitment and exceptional manner in ensuring the UTU voice is heard.

Cornmarket Insurance Service

UTU members benefit significantly from our longstanding partnership with Cornmarket Insurance Services. As our trusted insurance provider, Cornmarket delivers exceptional value across a broad range of insurance products, ensuring members receive comprehensive coverage tailored to their specific needs. We sincerely appreciate Cornmarket for being there for our teacher members and supporting their insurance needs and bringing peace of mind for our members. They offer car insurance with competitive rates and comprehensive coverage. Home insurance provides protection for property and possessions. Motorbike insurance offers specialized coverage for motorbike owners. Travel insurance provides comprehensive protection for domestic and international trips. Cornmarket Insurance Services has consistently demonstrated its support for UTU members and their presence and support at our Annual Conference is particularly valued.

Platinum Financial Planning Ltd.

Platinum Financial Planning has been working with UTU members for many years. They have extensive experience in advising our members on all aspects of their financial planning needs. Their expertise in the teacher pension scheme is second to none. Over the past year, we have continued to collaborate with INTO to provide webinars and seminars for pre-retirement planning, phased retirement and for members in mid-career. Feedback from members continues to be very positive, as they are guided through the complexities of pension decisions. We appreciate the valuable support Platinum Financial Planning provides to our members, ensuring they have the knowledge and confidence to make informed financial choices. We thank them for their ongoing support and look forward to the continued benefits of this collaboration.

Membership Plus

The Membership Plus cards continue to be a valuable and sought-after benefit for UTU members, offering exclusive savings across a diverse range of venues, retail stores, leisure activities, and dining experiences. In August 2024, we redistributed the cards directly to members by mail, ensuring seamless access to this fantastic perk. Members have the flexibility to use either the physical plastic card or conveniently register for the Membership Plus app, allowing them to unlock discounts effortlessly. Encouragingly, though the Membership Plus surveys we have observed a steady increase in registrations and active usage, demonstrating the growing popularity of this benefit. Feedback from members indicates that the savings they achieve through regular use of the card are significant and appreciated. To further enhance awareness and engagement, we continue to actively promote Membership Plus through our social media channels and member emails, ensuring that every UTU member is informed and able to maximise the advantages available to them.

BENEVOLENT FUND

The UTU Benevolent Fund provides financial assistance to the spouse, partner, or other relatives of a member who passes away while in service. Additionally, it may offer discretionary support to members experiencing financial hardship, assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Since our last conference, two death grants have been awarded to the families of members who passed away while in service.

Anthony Peter McArthur – Lisnagelvin Primary School

Heather Marshall – Cairnshill Primary School

Three further discretionary payments were made to members by the Central Executive Committee.

JOINT SECRETARIES FORUM

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 extension of the JSF membership to ensure EA was represented
- Fair and consistent application of the Area Planning procedure
- Discrepancies in the awarding of SEN allowances
- Retrieving data for the NISTR compliance report
- Recruitment practices for supply teachers
- LRA Independent Review Hearing Process Review
- Tackling Violence Against Teachers

- Time budgets for Special Schools
- ETI and Wording of TNC 2013/3 & 2013/4
- EA Fixed Term Contracts

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. 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 2025, 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 and was further compounded by the fact that, when pay negotiations proper commenced, the space allocated for JSF work was taken over by Pay Group meetings and negotiations.

It is imperative that this work resumes as a matter of urgency to deliver real change in the system.

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.

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.

TEACHING UNION CONFERENCES

The Annual Conferences of sister teaching unions throughout the various jurisdictions were attended by the President, Vice-President, Acting 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 BOARD: INTO, NEU AND UTU

JOINT INTO, NEU, AND UTU BOARD

The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU), Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), and National Education Union (NEU) continue to collaborate in the best interests of their members. The UTU is represented on the Joint Board by the President, Vice-President, Ex-President, General Secretary, and Deputy General Secretary. Throughout the year, other members of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) have also deputised when required. The Joint Board meets on a bi-monthly basis to coordinate efforts and address key issues.

As part of its work, the Joint Board organised two Joint Leadership Seminars in 2024. The first, held in May in Armagh, featured discussions on topics such as ETI, DTB, reasonable adjustments,

and safeguarding principals in their roles. The second seminar, in November in Ballymena, focused on Special Educational Needs (SEN), with contributions from the Children's Commissioner, the Children's Law Centre, Middletown Centre for Autism, and the SEND Transformation team. Further leadership events are planned for our Summer Term.

Joint student recruitment efforts continued throughout the year, with events held at Ulster University (Coleraine), Queen's University Belfast, Stranmillis College, and St Mary's University College. Additionally, the three unions have partnered to deliver an extensive programme of training events. A Joint INTO, NEU, and UTU YouTube channel remains a key platform for engagement and communication.

In March, eight Engagement Meetings were held across Armagh, Cookstown, Omagh, Londonderry, Belfast, Ballynahinch, Newry, and Ballymena, attracting over 600 teaching and principal members. These meetings provided an important forum for discussing workload-related challenges and ensuring members' voices are heard.

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 Colleges 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 chaired by Andrea Bradley, General Secretary of EIS.

The BIGTU group of General Secretaries and Presidents met on 17 June 2024 at the EIS Office in Edinburgh and the General Secretaries reconvened in the NASUWT training centre in Birmingham on 16th December 2024.

Items discussed included:

Reports on the latest work of Education International/ETUCE

TUAC (reported below)

The future of examinations

Teachers' pay issues and activity in 2024 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 22 - 23 May 2024 with a further meeting taking place on 7-8 November 2024.

UTU was represented by the General Secretary, Jacquie White, and the President, Leigh McKay in the first meeting, and Rebekka Gilpin, UTU Field Officer, in the second.

Larry Flanagan, Chair of the TUAC Working Group on Education and Skills, presided over the two-day events.

The following outlines the areas which were under for discussion.

In addition to reports from individual affiliates about developments and issues in their countries, the May meeting addressed education and climate change, assessment and certification in upper secondary education, social and emotional skills and PISA.

The agenda for the November meeting had a strong thematic focus on equity and included discussions on the role of career guidance in addressing social inequalities, the potential impact of AI on equity and inclusion in education, policies to address inequalities in returns to skills development, and on policies to promote quality and inclusive early childhood education and care.

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.

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

TEACHER UNITY

EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL (EI)

The 10th World Congress took place from 27th July to 2nd August in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and was attended by the President, Leigh McKay, and the General Secretary.

The World Congress takes place every 4 years; however, the pandemic continued to impact travel so there was a brief on-line congress last year to conduct essential business with the cycle proper resuming in 2024.

It was striking that the teaching unions worldwide face many issues in common and the resolutions were all too familiar to us in Northern Ireland.

Motions addressed in the conference fell under five categories:

- Growing our unions
- Elevating our profession
- Defending democracy
- Ensuring equity
- Promoting peace

and included such specific topics as:

Tackling the teacher shortage, Teacher wellbeing and mental health, Technology, artificial intelligence and the future of the teaching profession, and The status and quality of early childhood education post covid-19 pandemic.

The General Secretary spoke to a motion on schools as places of safety during conflict.

The EI Board was reconstituted at the congress and Daniel Kebede from NEU was supported by BIGTU in the election.

Further information can be found online or requested from the General Secretary.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT [Until October 2024]

Leigh McKay, BA (Hons), PGCE, DASE, Ballyclare Secondary School

ACTING PRESIDENT [From October 2024]

Lynelle Fenton, BEd (Hons), Braidside Integrated Primary School

VICE-PRESIDENT

Janice Mullan, BA (Hons), MSc, PGCE, ATCL, ETA EOTAS

GENERAL SECRETARY

Jacquie White, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, UTU Headquarters

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

Stephen McCord, BMedSc(Hons), MEd, PGCE

HONORARY TREASURER

David Thompson, MBE, BEd (Hons), Dip AS Ed, PQHNI, Dungannon Primary School

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION

Jaki Gargan, BEd (Hons), Glastry College
Jon Bleakney, BEd (Hons), Lakewood Special School
Naomi Billington, BEd (Hons), Carrowdore Primary School

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Aaron Davis, BEd (Hons), MEd, Knockevin Special School
Heather Milligan, BEd, DASE, PQHNI, Dromara Primary School
Grace McCullough, BEd (Hons), MEd, Regent House School

NORTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Jill Johnston, BSc (Hons), PGCE, Larne High School
Emma Loughridge, BEd (Hons), Eden Primary School
Jillian Jones, BEd (Hons), Drumrane Primary School
David Gault, BEd, MEd, Larne High School

SOUTHERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Heather Wilson, BA (Hons), Dungannon Primary School
Jill Ravey, BEd (Hons), Riverside Special School
Steven Savage, BEd (Hons), Cairnshill Integrated Primary School
Aaron Davidson, BEd (Hons), Moyallon Primary School

WESTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Audrey Dempsey, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Omagh County Primary School
Joy Carrothers, BEd (Hons), MEd, Cooley Primary School
Pauline Hurst, BEd (Hons), PQHNI Enniskillen Model Primary School

ATTENDANCE AT CEC MEETINGS

POSSIBLE ATTENDANCES: Fifteen Meetings - Unless stated otherwise

OFFICERS

Leigh McKay, President	5
Janice Mullan, Vice-President	14
Lynelle Fenton, Acting President	15

OFFICIAL/CLERICAL STAFF - in attendance

Jacquie White, General Secretary	13
Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary	14
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer	10
Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer	14
Lindsay Osborne	13
Tony McCabe	7

HONORARY TREASURER

David Thompson	15
----------------	----

BELFAST AREA

Naomi Billington	9
Jon Bleakney	13
Jaki Gargan	9

NORTH-EASTERN AREA

Jill Johnston	15
Emma Loughridge	10
Jillian Jones	14
David Gault	8

SOUTHERN AREA

Steven Savage	12
Aaron Davidson	12
Heather Wilson	14
Jill Ravey	15

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA

Aaron Davis	11
Heather Milligan	14
Grace McCullough	11

WESTERN AREA

Audrey Dempsey	13
Joy Carrothers	14
Pauline Hurst	14

SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE C.E.C.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES

Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*
 Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Audrey Dempsey
 Jon Bleakney
 Heather Wilson
 Aaron Davis
 Emma Loughridge

Convenor: Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*

EDUCATION AND POLICY

Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Audrey Dempsey
 Jon Bleakney
 Aaron Davidson
 Aaron Davis
 Jill Johnston
 Alistair Orr
 Janet Burke
 Naomi Billington
 Ashton Shields
 Rene Johnston
 Colin Irwin
 Callum Hannigan
 Andrew Armstrong
 Andrew Nicholl

Convenor: Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*

SALARIES AND CONDITIONS

Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*
 Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*

Convenor: Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*

ORGANISATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*
 Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Joseph Wyglendacz, *Field Officer*
 Rebekka Gilpin, *Field Officer*
 Joy Carrothers
 Jaki Gargan
 Steven Savage
 Heather Milligan
 Jill Johnston
 Pauline Hurst
 Jan Snoddy
 Claire Price

Convenor: Rebekka Gilpin, *Field Officer*

CONFERENCE

Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*
 Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Linday Osborne, *Operational Officer*
 Jon Bleakney
 Jill Ravey
 Heather Milligan
 Jillian Jones
 Pauline Hurst

Convenor: Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*
 Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Rebekka Gilpin, *Field Officer*
 Heather Wilson
 Grace McCullough
 Jillian Jones
 Ann Orr
 Alison Steen
 Naomi Billington
 Estelle McCord
 Jenny McCann

Convenor: Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*

ICT

Lynelle Fenton, *Acting President*
 Janice Mullan, *Vice-President*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 Tony McCabe, *Communications Officer*
 Joy Carrothers
 Aaron Davidson
 Aaron Davis
 Jill Johnston
 Jaki Gargan

Convenor: Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*

UTU REPRESENTATION ON **EXTERNAL BODIES**

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

HON. 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
Sally McKee
Alistair Orr
Lewis Love
Mervyn McClean

PENSION TRUSTEES

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

UNION FUND TRUSTEES

Lynelle Fenton, Acting President
Janice Mullan, Vice-President
David Thompson, Honorary Treasurer

2024 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

The Annual Conference determines policy and helps shape the work programme for the CEC.

Progress in many areas has been slow, partly due to the pause in industrial action as we returned to normal business, and subsequently, the commencement of industrial action in January of this year. Nevertheless, UTU continues to raise these issues and remains committed to advancing the motions passed at Conference with the relevant bodies.

Some progress on resolutions from Conference 2024 to date:

Resolution 3 – Mobile Phones

On 3 September, Education Minister Paul Givan issued new guidance to support school leaders in restricting the personal use of mobile phones throughout the school day, including during break and lunch times. This guidance aims to ensure a more consistent approach across all schools. Schools have been asked to review their policies on mobile phone use accordingly.

Resolution 7 – SEND Transformation

This remains a significant area of concern, with numerous interconnected issues, including rising demand, staffing challenges, and overall service provision. In February 2025, the Education Minister published the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Reform Agenda and a Five-Year Delivery Plan. Throughout this year, we have engaged regularly with the Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA) to address these matters.

Resolution 8 – Disability

This has been an area of notable progress. In May and June 2024, we conducted a member survey to gather further insights into the challenges affecting our teaching workforce. We are pleased to report that Pauline Hurst, UTU Disability Champion, continues to drive change at the system level, challenging managing authorities on workplace issues and advocating for meaningful improvements. We continue to work with Disability Employment Support Service (DESS) in moving issues forward.

Resolution 9 and 24– Reviews and Leadership Workload Review
While progress has been made, members on the ground have yet to see or feel the full impact of these changes. This was particularly evident during the industrial dispute, where the 2020 pay deal and associated reviews were frequently cited as having little tangible effect at school level.

In response, we actively engaged with members to identify key concerns and presented these to management. As a result, 25 key points were incorporated into the pay offer of 18 March 2025.

Resolution 10 – Independent Review of Education

The Education Minister appears to be pursuing his own agenda, with limited input from teaching unions. This has led to a curriculum review in October 2024, followed by the launch of the TransformED strategy, aimed at reforming and improving education delivery in Northern Ireland.

While we continue to engage and respond to consultations, progress remains limited. UTU will persist in advocating for the voice of the teaching profession to be heard in shaping the future of education.

Resolution 15 – Standardised Assessments

UTU has engaged regularly with DENI and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) over the past year. In late autumn, unions were informed of the 2025 assessment arrangements. UTU continues to call for these assessments to be shelved. However, the announced approach appears to be light-touch, aiming to minimise additional workload for teachers. Additionally, the Education Minister has outlined new Key Stage assessment arrangements for a three-year period starting in the 2025-26 academic year. At first glance, these also seem less burdensome than previous assessment frameworks.

Resolution 22 – Artificial Intelligence and Education Information (EDIS) Programme

UTU remains deeply concerned about these issues, particularly the lack of trade union input. The inclusion of AI as a supposed workload-reduction measure in the March 2025 pay deal was brazen, especially given that we were not involved in its development or trials.

Similarly, progress—or the lack thereof—in the EDIS programme has yet to be clearly communicated to UTU. We will continue to push for greater transparency and meaningful engagement in these critical areas.

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.

It has been a difficult year for industrial relations and we would like to thank you for your patience and support as we negotiated the circumstances that the resolution of pay presented over the past few months. We commend those who engaged with the member consultations through surveys and engagement events around the country, and for those who lent your support to the changing face of Action Short of Strike. We, in UTU, represent a broad swathe of opinion and outlook and we appreciate the input of all voices to steer the process towards resolution. We will be continuing to seek that support as we move forward on delivery of the revised pay deal and thank you in anticipation of the journey towards meaningful change for the profession.

We also wish to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to those colleagues in our sister teaching unions who stood alongside us in the efforts to deliver improvements for the teaching profession.

Their solidarity and support, both professional and personal, has been invaluable and a testament to what can be achieved when unions work together towards a common goal – the best interests of members. We, in UTU, commit to standing firm with them to ensure that tangible change to the culture of the teaching profession is delivered as agreed in the coming weeks and months.

Change can come unexpectedly and that is as true of the leadership of UTU as anywhere else. Our President, Leigh McKay, was unable to complete her year in office and the General Secretary would like to record her thanks to Leigh for her interest in and enthusiasm for the role during the time that she was in office. The General Secretary would also wish to express her thanks and appreciation both to the Ex-President, Lynelle Fenton, for stepping up as Acting President, and to the Vice-President, Janice Mullan for undertaking the office-based roles. The willingness and ease with which they responded to the needs of the union is to be commended and I personally thank them both for their support and friendship.

David Thompson, a Past President of UTU, continued to hold 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 unfailing 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 give of their time and expertise at short notice to seek progress and resolution for the members they represent. They have been an excellent committee who have worked tirelessly on behalf of the interests of others and they are to be commended.

Special thanks and appreciation must go to Pauline Hurst, a member of CEC and the UTU Disability Champion. Her enthusiasm and dedication to the role has been felt at many levels, from the individual members she has supported, and continues to support, to the development of information and knowledge platforms for all members, to the building of constructive relationships with employers and outside agencies in the members' interests. Her work to date has not only been beneficial for those in UTU but has also served to raise the profile of the union as a whole. The General Secretary would wish to extend thanks and gratitude on behalf of all members.

The President, GS and CEC appreciate the huge amount of work put in by Tony McCabe regarding the production of UTU publications in-house. Information 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 Jennifer, 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. Particular thanks go to Maura McKay who represented members over many years. Her expertise, direct approach and prompt responses have served to alleviate some very difficult circumstances for many and we will miss her greatly. We wish her well in her retirement. 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 issues faced by the profession 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. We trust and hope that these relationships will stand us in good stead as we move forward into enacting the workload elements of the recent pay deal and that together we can deliver 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.

CONFERENCE REPORT

2025



ULSTER TEACHERS UNION

94 MALONE ROAD
BELFAST
BT9 5HP

T: 02890 662216
E: OFFICE@UTU.EDU
W: WWW.UTU.EDU

SPONSORED BY:  Cornmarket