



CONFERENCE REPORT

CONFERENCE 2026

TEACHING **TODAY**. INSPIRING **TOMORROW**.

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GENERAL SECRETARY

INTRODUCTION

Colleagues,

Welcome to UTU Annual Conference 2026.

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

The last year has consisted of a huge amount of effort behind the scenes with regard to workload. We have agreed 26 Heads of Agreement – measures which we feel can be readily realised – with Management Side, and those stand ready to be delivered in the coming weeks. The Minister commissioned an Independent Review of Workload which has since reported and includes 27 key recommendations which the Minister is currently considering; indeed, work has already begun within TNC to also translate some of those into possible action in the short term. Further to that, the Minister secured the funding for the recent pay deal.

But none of this makes any difference if it is not translated into tangible change in the classroom. The pay uplift has, of course, been received but teachers and school leaders still await the out-workings of the related workload issues. At time of writing, I am hopeful that you will have begun to see movement by the time you arrive at the Roe Park for this year's Annual Conference.

Of course, workload as defined by those issues relating to contract, teaching and learning is not the full story. Engagement has taken place around wider issues

such as TransformED, schools' estate and the raft of challenges arising from the placement and support of our children with 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, examinations and qualifications and teachers' pay and conditions. UTU has further worked with employers and outside agencies in areas such as disability and safeguarding, 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 teachers and school leaders have faced. 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, yet again, been a very busy year, and there is no doubt that you, in the schools and classrooms, have been coping with both a pace of change and a level of uncertainty which have only served to bring new challenges to the 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.



Jacquie White
GENERAL SECRETARY



WORK OF THE UTU

During 2025/26 the Ulster Teachers' Union offered membership to qualified teachers in the Nursery, Primary, Post Primary (including Voluntary Grammar), Preparatory and Special school sectors. Student teachers are granted membership as Associate members, although they do not qualify for voting rights. Retired members may also opt to retain Associate status but may not be elected to posts within the UTU structures. Temporary teachers who are employed through NISTR are also in membership, and their membership fee depends on their earnings.

In terms of numbers, UTU membership remains steady, and the significant interest in our communications, virtual events, training opportunities and more options to accessing membership through online channels has certainly helped to facilitate this. The excellent level of individual support provided to members by our Officials has also played a key role with members joining following recommendation.

Student recruitment has taken place at the Initial Teacher Education Teacher Colleges/Universities this year with a significant number joining the three-union partnership (UTU/INTO/NEU). There are challenges here due to the changing situation regarding students no longer living on campus and the reduction in hours that the students are actually in the colleges; it is also the case that increasing numbers are training with the view to teaching overseas. Our Officials, however, have responded accordingly and been creative in making and building upon contacts to ensure student teachers are registered and, so, protected.

Numerous school visits have been taking place, with our Officials attending member meetings all over the province. Visits can be pastoral involving all UTU members in a school, or may be in response to an issue experienced by one individual or a group of teachers. Our Officials respond very quickly to situations which impact on members and receive frequent appreciative feedback. The President has also been very active in travelling to schools and providing members with face-to-face contact.

A large proportion of members are in the younger age category and consequently, our Future in Teaching (FIT) Group has been at the forefront of liaising with and involving those members. Our Officials, Rebekka Gilpin and Joseph Wyglendacz, have been highly involved at student level and we thank those school leaders who have engaged in sessions which they have organised; links and contacts have further been developed through other strategies which are outlined in their reports. The current Chair of FIT, Jillian Jones, is an elected member of our Central Executive Committee and reports on progress on a monthly basis.

TRAINING/FORUMS

Joint training takes place on a regular basis in partnership with INTO and NEU. A wide range of courses have been available and engagement has been excellent.

Joint forums also take place with specific groups of members, some of which are very regular due to developments in their roles and contracts, and others as and when particular issues pertaining to a group arise.

A wider training programme is also made available to all members facilitated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and members have engaged in areas such as Menopause and Tackling Inequality in the Workplace. We have also had our UTU Disability Champion and UTU Neurodiversity Champion trained through these programmes.

Details on the training and events are included later in the report.

CCEA ENGAGEMENT

The engagement with CCEA has been more limited this year due to the changes being considered by the Minister in relation to assessment. UTU, with NITC colleagues, has, however, met with CCEA in relation to the workload impact of controlled assessments and the relationships have been maintained. It is the intention that the UTU Post-Primary Group will re-establish more frequent engagement as the proposals under TransformED begin to roll out. These engagements were productive from both perspectives as UTU members had the opportunity to feed directly into decisions whilst CCEA gained a greater understanding of the practicalities from the perspective of the practitioners. It was also an opportunity to assess the clarity and levels of dissemination of relevant information. We trust that the relationships developed to date will continue to be of benefit to our post-primary members in the future.

PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE

UTU regularly provides support as follows:

- advice to individual members by phone or email
- regular meetings with school representatives/members
- UTU Updates by email
- reports and comments on a wide variety of current topics posted on the UTU website/social media platforms
- individual advice on issues relating to employment
- advice to members on career progression, appointments, PRSD and salary
- advice on retirement options

The queries this year, as ever, have encompassed a wide range of individual issues. If there is a theme at all, it is the fact that serious under-funding has resulted in even less support for teachers than before in a range of different contexts. The out-workings of recent workload agreements have continued to result in intensive

engagement with Management Side as we hopefully move closer to delivery, and this has had an impact on the overall workload of Officials. Procedures, both formal and informal, are used often in schools to address industrial relations issues and members have the support of Officials at all stages of these processes as they play out. We also support members who are experiencing illness, work-based injury and other circumstances which impact on working lives rather than arise from it and work with management at different levels to seek resolution and support.

UTU Officials continue to provide a high level of prompt and effective service to members facing a range of difficult circumstances. An outline of the types of issues faced this year can be found under Law and Tenure.

We are ably assisted in advising members by our solicitors Shean Dickson Merrick and I would like to place on record our sincere appreciation to the team of experts there, including Jennifer Connolly and Owen Hutchinson who accompany our members to interviews under caution with the PSNI or advise on available legal redress. UTU members can be assured that they are given the best possible legal advice from local solicitors with many years of specialized knowledge of the legal process and norms in this jurisdiction. From time to time we also employ barristers to provide Counsel's Opinion as to the merits of a case and I would like to put on record our thanks to them.

The following are the reports from the Officials:

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT - Stephen McCord

Since my last report, the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) has remained resolute in fighting for securing fair pay and improved working conditions for our teacher and principal members. Building on the foundations laid in previous years, our campaigning has continued to prioritise industrial action and robust advocacy. This approach contributed to the April 2025 pay deal and independent workload review and the most recent 4% pay increase implemented in January 2026, representing tangible progress for members. Alongside pay, the independent workload review marks a critical commitment from the Education Minister to addressing the unsustainable pressures facing the profession. The publication of its report in November 2025, and the recommendations it contains, is welcomed by the Union. However, this must now be followed by determined engagement to ensure these recommendations translate into settled agreements, with the management side fully delivering on their commitments to achieve meaningful and lasting change.

Central to the work of the Ulster Teachers' Union is the principle that members are the union, and that their concerns are addressed promptly, professionally, and with the full support of elected representatives and officials.

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The work of the UTU office during this period has encompassed advising and representing members across a wide spectrum of issues, ranging from informal workplace concerns to formal contractual matters, including disciplinary hearings and investigations. Significant support has also been provided in relation to attendance management issues, from sick leave and attendance meetings to detailed advice on maternity, paternity and shared parental leave, as well as flexible working arrangements.

Notable successes during the year included securing backdated pay for members and achieving meaningful, sustained improvements in working environments, reflecting the Union's commitment to effective representation and positive change on behalf of its membership.

Amalgamations and school closures during the past year have once again presented significant challenges for members working in affected schools. In cases where small schools close, the loss is felt deeply, as these schools are often the heart of their communities. Many staff have dedicated much of their professional lives to serving the school, its pupils, and parents, making such transitions particularly difficult and distressing.

The impact of closures and amalgamations extends beyond individual staff members, affecting pupils, families, and the wider community. Throughout these processes, the Ulster Teachers' Union remains steadfast in working alongside members in affected schools, providing support and guidance, and ensuring that all agreed procedures are fully adhered to and members' rights protected.

Engagement with external partners has again remained a priority, with continued collaboration with Cornmarket Insurance, Membership Plus, and Platinum Independent Financial Planning Ltd. These partnerships deliver tangible benefits to our members and enhance the overall value of UTU membership.

Membership Plus continues to provide members with access to savings and exclusive perks across the Province and beyond. Platinum Independent Financial Planning Ltd supports members through high-quality seminars and webinars, offering clear, informative guidance to help members make important, life-changing financial decisions. Cornmarket Insurance continues to provide tailored protection for teachers through a wide range of insurance products designed specifically to meet members' professional and personal needs. I extend my sincere thanks to all our partner organisations for their ongoing commitment and support of UTU members.

My role on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) has involved attendance at bi-monthly meetings and representation at a range of key discussions. I have attended Department of Education meetings relating to TransformEd, as well as management meetings addressing various Heads of Agreement arising from the April 2025 pay deal.

I have deputised for the General Secretary, Jacquie White, when required, including at meetings of the Joint Secretaries' Forum and other relevant engagements. Over the past year, I have also attended meetings of the Joint Consultative Forum and represented the Union at the Stormont Education Committee.

This year, I have participated in a range of events, conferences, and meetings related to education, trade unionism, and policy discussions. I attended the conferences of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) in Galway, the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) in Dublin, National Education Union (NEU) in Harrogate and the INTO Northern Conference in Belfast, where a broad range of educational, industrial, and organisational issues were considered.

In May, I attended the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) Working Group on Education and Skills in Paris. This useful and informative meeting focused on current and emerging uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, trade union engagement in this area, and AI capabilities, as well as exploring evidence on the impact of digital activity on child well-being, with contributions and perspectives from a range of countries.

I also attended the Education International (EI) Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Brussels in December. This informative event generated significant discussion on the use of AI in schools, its implications for teachers, and the role of education trade unions in ensuring appropriate safeguards and protections for members.

I took part in the May Day 2025 rally and march in Belfast, demonstrating solidarity with workers' rights, and attended the International Workers' Memorial Day event at Stormont, marking International Workers' Memorial Day in remembrance of those who have lost their lives at work.

In celebrating and engaging with local educational events, I attended the INTO Vere Foster Annual Lecture, where the guest speaker was Mark Langhammer. I also attended the 3rd Annual Dr Éamon Phoenix Memorial Lecture, at which the keynote address was delivered by Lucy Crehan, entitled "Global Learning for Transforming Curriculum in Northern Ireland".

This year, on the union front, I attended meetings of the NIC ICTU Health and Safety Committee, contributing to discussions on workplace safety and protections. I also participated in ICTU Global Solidarity meetings, engaging with wider trade union initiatives and international solidarity efforts. In July, I attended the Biennial Delegate Conference held at Belfast's ICC. Furthermore, I took part in the Pilot White Ribbon Organisations Programme, held outside Dublin, alongside other trade union representatives, supporting initiatives to address gender-based violence and promote respect in the workplace. I have also attended several meetings of the Ballymena and Antrim Trades Council.

I have worked closely with colleagues from INTO and the NEU on a regular basis to support recruitment initiatives and to deliver webinars, seminars and School Representative training, ensuring continued collaboration and effective union engagement for our members. In addition, I continue to serve as convener of both the Education and Policy Sub-Committee and the ICT Sub-Committee. Reports on the work of each of these sub-committees can be found elsewhere in this conference report.

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to our General Secretary, Jacquie White, for her strong, principled, and tireless leadership of the Union. In a continually challenging and changing educational landscape, her commitment to members and to the core values of the UTU has been both reassuring and inspiring.

I also wish to acknowledge the dedication of our officials, Rebekka and Joseph, who are consistently ready and willing to support, guide, and stand up for our members' rights. Their professionalism, expertise, and determination ensure that members are never without strong representation.

Finally, I want to recognise the vital work of the UTU office staff—Tony, Lindsay, Meriel, Denise, and Heather—whose work behind the scenes ensures that members receive the accurate advice, high-quality service, and practical support they need. Their collective efforts are central to the Union's ability to deliver for members every day.

FIELD OFFICER REPORT - Rebekka Gilpin

This year began on a positive note again with the resolution of our previous pay dispute and the agreement reached and a further pay award of 4% delivered to our members. A period of relatively stable industrial relations was welcomed and allowed progress to be made in other areas of work. The independent workload review and ongoing work on the Heads of Agreement promise to deliver meaningful change for members on the ground, if implemented and fully resourced.

A significant portion of our work as officials is focused on casework, and I have supported members in a wide range of matters including sickness absence management, disciplinary proceedings, grievances, and cases involving bullying and harassment, among others. Alongside casework and general member support, I have continued to participate in regular meetings with the EA, CCEA, ETUG, CYPs, NITC and ICTU. I also represent the UTU at the Equality Coalition. In addition, I have served on various LRA panels representing TUS, a role that I find particularly rewarding.

Our termly and monthly consultation meetings with CYPs focused mainly on the ongoing nature of the SEND Transformation Programme and the significant and fast-paced changes facing members across

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services and schools. I will continue to work closely with colleagues in NITC to ensure the voices of our members across the teaching workforce are represented.

The UTU's engagement with students has also continued throughout the year. We attended a number of recruitment events, hosted question-and-answer sessions with several Principals, and held 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 remained highly beneficial. Together, we have reviewed and expanded our training provision for members, including the addition of further webinars delivered by representatives from the joint board. As in previous years, Platinum Financial—who provide excellent financial advice to members regarding pensions and general financial planning—have hosted both webinars and in-person events, all of which were very well attended and positively received.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to the President, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, and all Field Officers and staff for their continued work, support and advice. Their commitment and the strength of our teamwork have been invaluable both personally and professionally, and together we remain committed to providing the best possible support for our membership.

ORGANISING OFFICER REPORT - Joseph Wyglendacz

Reflecting on the past year, the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) has consistently demonstrated steadfast dedication to its members. Over the course of this year in particular, the Union has made significant progress in strengthening engagement and deepening its connection with members — a development that stands out as both meaningful and highly positive for the Union's future.

The Union has achieved a wide range of workplace successes through the collectivising and organisation of school groups. Direct engagement with members and union representatives during school visits has been particularly valuable. These face-to-face interactions strengthen relationships, provide meaningful opportunities to address concerns, and foster sustained collaboration.

Experience continues to show that when teachers are organised, they are far more effective in tackling issues relating to working conditions, workload, and safety. A unified voice empowers teachers to advocate confidently for improvements and to help shape environments that are truly conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. Over the past year, we have supported numerous school groups to organise collectively, enabling them to secure improved working conditions, enhanced resources, and the appropriate support where it has been needed most.

I have actively contributed to a wide range of Representative Training sessions, with a particular emphasis on Health and Safety. These sessions have been instrumental in equipping representatives with the essential knowledge, practical skills, and confidence required to effectively fulfil their roles. Through comprehensive guidance on current legislation, risk assessment procedures, workplace inspections, and incident reporting, representatives are better prepared to identify potential hazards and respond proactively to concerns raised by members.

Importantly, these training opportunities also create space for discussion, shared learning, and the exchange of experiences, strengthening the overall network of representatives across schools. By ensuring that representatives are well-informed and supported, we enhance their capacity to promote and maintain safe, healthy, and compliant working environments within their respective schools and workplaces, ultimately contributing to the wellbeing of both staff and pupils.

Our recruitment efforts across the Initial Teacher Training institutions (ITTs) have delivered encouraging results, with a substantial number of student teachers choosing to join our membership. We remain fully committed to expanding this reach throughout the academic year, particularly engaging those students who may not have been accessible during Fresher Fairs.

As part of our continued outreach, I have delivered tailored presentations to students at Stranmillis University College and Queen's University Belfast, with plans to extend this engagement to Ulster University. These sessions have focused on practical and highly relevant topics such as contracts, time budgets, and professional responsibilities, equipping students with essential knowledge and confidence as they transition from training into their teaching careers. By addressing real-world workplace issues at an early stage, we are empowering future teachers to enter the profession informed, prepared, and supported.

Following the Joint Board meeting on 10 November, a proposal was brought forward to establish a dedicated working group focused on collaborative student recruitment and engagement. This was formally confirmed at the subsequent Joint Board meeting on 12 January. The Student Recruitment and Engagement Working Group (SREWG) comprises myself, Danielle Black (NEU), and Lisa Magginis (INTO). Our inaugural meeting took place on 20 January at the NEU offices, with a follow-up meeting held on 19 February. The group's primary objective is to strengthen joint engagement initiatives and develop collaborative events aimed at addressing the recent decline in student recruitment figures. This downturn was largely attributable to the absence of union representation at Fresher Fairs at QUB, where unions were not invited to participate.

To date, the group has:

- Delivered an iPad competition across all ITTs, promoted through their social media platforms to boost engagement and visibility.
- Delivered a joint lecture at QUB (UTU and NEU), noting that NASUWT was not invited to participate.
- Secured renewed sponsorship agreements, with potential for increased partnership opportunities.
- Developed proposals for enhanced induction week engagement.
- Compiled and submitted recommendations to the Joint Board outlining future opportunities for collaborative student engagement.

In reflecting on the work of the F.I.T. group over the past year, it is evident that renewed attention is needed to restore its energy and effectiveness as a vibrant organising forum. While the proposal to host a F.I.T. Conference in Winter 2025 was well intentioned, the level of interest and uptake was lower than anticipated. This outcome provides an important opportunity for reflection and recalibration.

In light of this, it may be timely to review and refresh the group's terms of reference. Establishing a clearer strategic focus, defined objectives, and measurable outcomes would help to sharpen the group's purpose and direction. By realigning its aims and intentions, the F.I.T. group can be repositioned as a more dynamic, engaging, and impactful platform for collaboration and organisation moving forward.

Equalities work remains a central pillar of the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU), as we continue striving to ensure meaningful representation, fairness, and inclusivity both within our organisation and across the wider educational landscape. This year, a significant proportion of our focus has been directed towards advancing support for members living with disabilities. Through sustained advocacy, guidance, and practical intervention, we have led the way in delivering tangible outcomes — ensuring that reasonable adjustments, workplace protections, and appropriate supports are not only discussed but effectively implemented.

Another important area of focus has been preparing for and representing the Union at Belfast Pride, where the UTU has officially participated since 2023. Our continued presence at this event visibly reaffirms our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and demonstrates solidarity with LGBTQ+ members and the wider community. Participation in Pride is not merely symbolic; it reflects our broader objective of fostering a profession — and a society — where all identities are respected, valued, and celebrated.

In collaboration with the Presidents, a key priority for the forthcoming academic year will be the development of a more strategic and coordinated approach to Branch and Area Association meetings. This will include the creation of a comprehensive, forward-facing calendar outlining proposed meeting dates alongside suggested



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thematic focuses for discussion. By making this information available in advance via our website, we aim to improve accessibility, transparency, and engagement. Forward planning will help ensure that each meeting is purposeful, well-structured, and aligned with our overarching organisational goals, strengthening participation and enhancing the effectiveness of our collective work.

A substantial proportion of our casework this year has centred on advising members in relation to forthcoming policy changes and proposed workload reforms. These queries have required detailed interpretation, careful guidance, and ongoing reassurance as members seek clarity on how such developments will affect their professional responsibilities and working conditions.

Alongside this, we have continued to provide comprehensive support across a broad range of individual matters, including sickness absence, disciplinary proceedings, grievances, and cases involving bullying and harassment. Our priority throughout has been to ensure that members feel represented, protected, and fully informed at every stage of often complex and sensitive processes.

The capacity of the Education Authority to effectively manage HR procedures has been widely recognised as limited, resulting in an increasing number of cases being outsourced to the private HR consultancy HeadsTogether. While feedback among officials has been mixed, my own experience has been largely positive. In comparison to previous processes, I have found HeadsTogether to operate with a higher degree of professionalism, efficiency, and procedural clarity. Their investigations, in particular, have tended to be more thorough and evidence-based, which provides greater confidence in both the process and the outcomes, while avoiding unnecessary delay.

In addition, the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) continues to lead the way in supporting members with Shared Parental Leave (SPL) enquiries. Over the past year alone, our guidance has enabled members collectively to secure in excess of £1.5 million in entitlements that may otherwise have gone unclaimed. This represents not only a significant financial benefit to individual members and their families, but also a clear demonstration of the tangible value of informed union support.

Within the wider Trade Union movement, I have represented the UTU at numerous meetings including (and not limited to): NITPS Advisory Board, TransformED, CCEA engagement meetings, ICTU PR Campaigns Team, NIC-ICTU H&S Sub Committee, CLA meetings, 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.

In conclusion, I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported me in my role within the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) over the past year.

In particular, I wish to acknowledge Jacquie White and Stephen McCord for their steadfast leadership, guidance, and unwavering commitment to the Union's values and direction. I am also deeply grateful to Rebekka Gilpin for her continued support, wise counsel, and readiness to provide advice whenever needed.

My thanks extend equally to all office staff whose professionalism, efficiency, and good humour ensure that our work runs smoothly and effectively. Their behind-the-scenes dedication is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

I look forward to engaging with many more members — both familiar faces and those new to the Union — at Annual Conference 2026, as we continue working together to strengthen and advance our collective voice.

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 1 representative for every 1000 members or part of 1000 members up to a maximum of 5 representatives. 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 and according to the Constitution, there must be four out of the five unions voting in favour.

The NITC Officers for the current term are: *(until September 2025)*

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

(from September 2025)

- Chair: Justin McCamphill (*NASUWT*)
- Vice-Chair: Jacquie White (*UTU*)
- 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 Immediate Past President, Lynelle Fenton, the President, Janice Mullan, the Vice-President, Jon Bleakney, the General Secretary, Jacquie White, the Deputy General Secretary, Stephen McCord and Field Officer, Rebekka Gilpin.

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 2025, meetings of NITC resumed on 19th May.

PAY AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The pay offer of 5.5% across all points in the salary scale and allowances was accepted in April 2025 and was delivered to members over the following two months.

With the pay offer came a commitment to delivering on 26 identified areas of workload at 3, 6 and 12-month intervals and an Independent Panel to review workload for the teaching profession.

Work on the 26 defined areas began on 6th May with a Preliminary Post Agreement Joint Secretaries meeting to establish a direction for the work. Leads for both NITC and Management Side were allocated to each specific task to ensure accountability and teams were identified where required for certain elements of work. Contact was also made with external bodies such as DE Officials, ETI and CCEA where their input would be necessary for the work to be progressed. Meetings continued at a frequent rate with progress being monitored and reported at NITC, Management Side, Joint Secretaries Forum and TNC meetings. Agreement had been reached to allow until the end of January 2026 for the Minister to address the pay claim for 2025/26. This timescale is directly related to the current receipt of funding into the Department of Finance and, subsequently, the Department of Education. A pay offer of 4% across all salary points and Teaching Allowances was agreed in January and duly received by members.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF TEACHER WORKLOAD

The Independent Panel was commissioned by the Minister and was established on 1 May 2025. The Panel comprised of an NITC nominee, a nominee from Management Side and an Independent Chair appointed by the Minister.

Larry Flanagan, Past GS of EIS, Past President of ETUCE and current Chair of TUAC was the NITC nominee.

The Panel moved quickly to engagement with stakeholders and took evidence from a wide range of sources.

The NITC Leads met with the Panel on the 29th May to ascertain the mechanisms of the process and outline initial high-level concerns.

A UTU delegation, comprising Jacquie White, GS, Stephen McCord, DGS, Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer, Jill Ravey, CEC and Jill Johnston, CEC, met with the Panel on 13th June. We had an in-depth and meaningful discussion with a particular focus on special needs, post-primary assessment and culture.

The Panel had further engagement on a regular basis with NITC Leads, Management Side Representatives, Chairs and Secretaries of NITC and MS as required regarding the 26 Heads of Agreement and the compilation of the Report culminating in the Panel reporting to the Minister in November 2025.

OTHER ISSUES

NITC continued to address other issues as they arose and the following are a range of the areas which were under consideration.

- Arrangements for End-of-Key Stage Assessment
- SEN Allowance case work
- PRSD following ASOS
- Developments in the establishment of Local Impact Teams (LITs)
- SEN placements
- Contracts of teachers in Special Provision
- The relationships between school and EA in relation to Special Provision
- Legislation relating to the ETI

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.

- Meeting with GTCNI regarding developing structure, legislation and the implications for teachers
- Meeting with DE Officials re ETI legislation
- DE Officials re changes to SDP

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
- Engagement with CYPS
- Safeguarding Forum

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.

- Extending the school age 16-18
- Changes to ETI legislation
- Review of the Teaching Appointments Scheme for Controlled Schools



TEACHERS' NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

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

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

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) is the Teachers' Side of the TNC. NITC consists of the five recognised teachers' unions, UTU, INTO, NEU, NAHT, and NASUWT. Each NITC union has two representatives on the Teachers' Side of the TNC. The General Secretary, Jacquie White, and the President, Janice Mullan, represented UTU on the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) this year.

TNC relies on the work which is carried out through a range of sub-groups. The Joint Secretaries' Forum meets monthly whereas other groups such as the TNC Pay Sub-Group meet as frequently as necessary depending on the status of the work.

The TNC is now fully operational and, whilst much of the work this year has focused on pay and related out-workings, other issues which have been under consideration include:

- Implementation of TNC 2025/1 in relation to development of the 26 Heads of Agreement
- ETI
- Ratification of TNC 2025/2 Procedure for Supporting Effective Teaching in Schools and TNC 2025/3 Procedure for Supporting Effective Leadership by School Principal
- Joint Communication and Interaction with Panel
- Attendance and Flexible Working Procedures
- NISTR – employment of supply teachers
- TNC Reconstitution
- Teacher redeployment

Substantive work on a number of other issues was carried out by NITC but has not been fully progressed to a conclusion through the JSF.

PAY

The Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) is the forum for the negotiation of teachers' pay. Following the individual union ballots which took place in December 2024, UTU, in line with INTO, NEU and NASUWT, declared trade dispute and informed management side that they would engage in industrial action in January 2025. Following a request from Management Side it was agreed to postpone action for four weeks to allow negotiations to take place.

Negotiations were unsuccessful and Action Short of Strike action began on 10 February 2025 following a rejection of the first pay offer on 6 February 2025. A revised offer was rejected on 28 March 2025.

Following an intervention from the Education Minister and the offer of an Independent Review of Teacher Workload, NITC accepted the pay offer on 4 April 2025.

The offer was as follows;

In addition to the incremental progression within salary scales which is payable by contractual entitlement, teacher salary scale points will be revalorised as follows:

- i. A 5.5% cost of living award for all teachers to be paid from 1 September 2024
- ii. Teaching and Special Needs Allowances to be increased by 5.5% paid from 1 September 2024.

HEADS OF AGREEMENT

In addition to a revaloration of Teachers pay, an agreement on progressing TNC 2024/2 is set out on *pages 10 and 11*.

Independent Review of Teacher Workload

Further, the Education Minister offered an Independent Review of Workload with his addendum to the offer set out below:

My proposal is as follows:

- As an addendum to the offer made by Management Side, I would commission an independent review covering all aspects of workload.
- The Independent review would be taken forward by a three-member panel, comprising an independent chair appointed by me following consultation with Management Side and NITC, a member nominated by NITC and a member nominated by Management Side.
- The Panel will report to me by the end of November 2025. Should for any reason, the Panel require some flexibility around timing, I will consult with you.
- The Panel will also monitor the implementation of the Heads of Agreement commitments issued alongside the Management Side pay offer. Both Management Side and NITC will work constructively to implement the joint commitments made. The Panel will periodically report to me on progress being made.

The Panel was duly established and comprised of:

Independent Chair: Paul Sweeney

NITC nominee: Larry Flanagan

MS nominee: Liam Perry

Martin Monaghan, DE, provided secretariat support.

The Panel reported to the Minister at the end of November and the Minister published the report with commitments to deliver.

Work is currently underway to determine means of delivery of the 26 Heads of Agreement and the recommendations arising from the Independent Review of Workload.

Agreement had been reached to allow until the end of January 2026 for the Minister to address the pay claim for 2025/26. This timescale is directly related to the current receipt of funding into the Department of Finance and, subsequently, the Department of Education. A pay offer of 4% across all salary points and

Teaching Allowances was agreed in January and duly received by members.

#	Initiative / Action	Projected Timeframe
1	A workload impact assessment for new initiatives will be developed at a system and school level.	Substantial progress within 6–12 months
WORKING HOURS		
2	Schools will be reminded to ensure their operational hours and contact methods have been communicated to parents; including that staff are not expected to respond outside of operational hours unless in a critical incident. Governors will be reminded of the Working Time Regulations and the Department and employing authorities will be mindful of these arrangements when issuing communications.	Within 3 months
3	The Department will remind employing authorities and Boards of Governors that the provision in DE 2008/17 for two days per week release time from teaching for eligible school leaders must be protected from all other obligations so that they may concentrate on their leadership, management and administrative duties.	Within 3 months
CONSULTATION		
4	A report on the Joint Consultative Committee Pilot will be completed for consideration by TNC, subject to which consideration will be given to making a JCC Protocol available to all schools.	Within 6 months
5	EA will complete a survey of schools on the support it provides.	Within 3 months
6	Staff Consultation Guidance for Schools, that has been jointly developed, will be agreed and issued. Principals will be advised of the importance of consultation best practice.	Within 6 months
SCHOOL LEADERS		
7	Following Ministerial approval of a revised School Development Plan process, and having engaged with NITC, DE will establish a small working group that includes school leaders to co-design the future guidance.	Within 3 months
8	TNC 2013/4 (Procedure for Supporting Effective Teaching in Schools) & TNC 2013/3 (Procedure for Supporting Effective Leadership by School Principals) will be amended (removing the reference to 'unsatisfactory') in line with recommendation from ETI.	Within 3 months
9	Preventing Violence at Work guidance will be agreed and issued to schools.	Within 9–12 months
10	Consistent and standardised expectations for PRSD review of school principals will be communicated.	Within 9–12 months
11	Following engagement with NITC, School Leaders will have the opportunity to input into Governor training through a consultative group established by EA.	Within 9–12 months
12	EA will issue system-level emails to schools in line with relevant school phase where required.	Within 6 months
13	EA will pilot in-person events aimed at providing support and guidance on critical administrative procedures.	Within 6 months
ACCESSIBILITY TO TEACHERS' TERMS & CONDITIONS		
14	A central, accessible online resource will be created for DE/TNC documents relating to teachers' terms and conditions. Subsequent to which TNC will issue a communication to Boards of Governors to raise awareness of, and highlight the importance of adherence to, TNC procedures.	Within 6 months
15	TNC policies, procedures and guidelines will be reviewed to ensure that they are up to date, fit for purpose and compliant with legislation and, as appropriate, reflect the position for temporary and supply teachers.	Ongoing



WORKLOAD AGREEMENT TNC 2024/2 AND DIRECTED TIME BUDGETS

16	Management Side will seek to build awareness of the existing capacity for working patterns to be managed flexibly and in such a way so as to meet the needs of the school, department and if appropriate, the individual teacher; taking cognisance of, for example, the varying levels of time/workload required for assessment in the school year.	Within 3 months
17	The Workload Agreement TNC 2024/2 will be reviewed by TNC following a full and uninterrupted academic year in operation.	Within 12 months
18	A draft collective grievance procedure for teachers will be progressed in line with the review of the Workload Agreement.	In line with the timeframe of the above review
19	Where an issue cannot be resolved at school level, it will be raised with the relevant trade union office who will bring these to the attention of the school improvement professional and/or the Chair of the Board of Governors as applicable.	Ongoing
20	ETI will work with NITC and Management Side to understand concerns about the operation of Directed Time Budgets (DTB) where they are identified at school level and to facilitate agreement on how this might be best addressed moving forward.	Within 12 months

ASSESSMENT

21	NITC and Management Side will jointly engage with CCEA to progress a resolution in respect of workload associated with controlled assessments.	Within 3 months
22	A longer-term review of statutory assessment arrangements has commenced, and the Minister has agreed proposals for the interim operation for 2025/26 to 2027/28 that continue to minimise workload for teachers and school leaders. Arrangements for 2024/25, as set out in the DE letter to Principals of 16 October 2024, will also ensure minimum workload by focusing only on reading and numeracy, with support materials provided by CCEA.	Ongoing as outlined
23	Management Side and NITC recognise the benefit of, and encourage continued participation in, the International Large Scale Assessments (ILSAs), such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, to showcase performance, provide a robust time series of educational attainment and a wealth of other data.	Ongoing
24	Management Side, further to engagement with NITC, will jointly engage with practitioners and officials to consider workload associated with, and effectiveness of approaches to, internal assessment/tracking at school level.	Within 6 months

PLANNING & OBSERVATION

25	TNC Joint Communication on Inspection will be issued to all teachers.	Within 3 months
26	Management Side, further to engagement with NITC, will jointly engage with practitioners and officials to consider the workload associated with, and effectiveness of approaches to, short, medium & long-term planning; as well as evaluation through pupil observation in Early Years & Special Schools.	Within 6 months

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 and originally comprised of three representatives from Teachers' Side and three representatives from Management Side. Recent reviews have led to all five NITC unions being represented on this body with a corresponding expansion to Management Side representatives.

This group convenes monthly to progress work 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 are ratified at TNC and the revised Circulars become 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, Jacque White, represents UTU on the Joint Secretaries' Forum.

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

STRUCTURE OF JOINT SECRETARIES

The structure of JSF was discussed and reviewed to ensure that the relevant parties for moving issues forward were in the room.

WORKLOAD

The following were standing items:

- Implementation OF TNC 2025/1
- Delivering Stability in Industrial Relations
- Heads of Agreement Update
- Decisions/Risks/Issues to Escalate
- Update on Independent Review of Workload Recommendations

OTHER ISSUES UNDER CONSIDERATION INCLUDED:

- TNC 2011/2 Recording of data
- Preventing Violence at Work EA Policy and Guidance
- Retired Teachers
- TNC Flexible Working and Attendance Reviews
- Inspection Legislation
- External providers for teaching qualifications
- SEN Allowances
- NITC Correspondence:
- EA Scheme of Management
- Tackling Violence
- Trans Guidance
- JCCs
- DE Updates
- Children Looked After
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework
- Operation Compass
- Qualifications Consultation

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 2026, the third and fourth, whilst near completion, have failed to reach ratification level.



REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES

CONFERENCE SUB-COMMITTEE – Lynelle Fenton, *Ex-President, Convener*

The Conference Sub – Committee has met regularly over the past year to plan for Conference 2026. We trust that the Roe Park Resort and the plans that we have in place for Conference 2026 provide a valuable, worthwhile, and enjoyable experience for delegates and guests.

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

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES SUB-COMMITTEE - Lynelle Fenton, *Ex-President, Convener*

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.

There has been regular maintenance to the interior and exterior the UTU building. In May 2025 a property survey was completed and a report compiled.

New IT hardware has been purchased for the UTU staff.

Regular reviews of service providers have taken place and the respective contracts changed as necessary. This includes a new phone system from Barclay Communications and a new cleaning contract awarded to MK cleaning.

We are currently reviewing options to both sustain and grow the benevolent fund.

A staff salary review has commenced. It has been agreed to increase the employer's contribution to staff pensions.

It was agreed to provide support to Stranmillis Students Union in order to maintain links with the college and ensure a growth in new membership.

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.

HEALTH AND SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE - Pauline Hurst, *Convener*

The Health and Safety Sub-Committee met throughout the year to promote safe, supportive, and sustainable working conditions for teachers across Northern Ireland.

A key focus this year was advocating for stronger protections and practical support for staff working with students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Committee members emphasised the increasing complexity of needs in classrooms and called for appropriate staffing, high-quality training, thorough risk assessments, and investment in safe and suitable environments.

Looking ahead, health and safety related to SEN will be a significant part of the committee's upcoming programme of work, ensuring that the challenges faced by staff are addressed with urgency and clarity.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all members of the Health and Safety Sub-Committee for their dedication, insight, and commitment. Your efforts continue to strengthen protections for staff and ensure that the wellbeing of those supporting our most vulnerable learners remains a priority.

ICT SUB-COMMITTEE - Stephen McCord, *Convener*

Over the past year, the ICT Sub-Committee has met on several occasions to support, review, and further develop the technological operations of UTU Headquarters. Our work has spanned hardware and software oversight, database management, the mass emailing system, and the continually developing area of social media—each of which plays a vital role in how we communicate with, engage, and support our members.

UTU continues to maintain a strong presence across a range of social media platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Threads, LinkTree, YouTube, BlueSky and TikTok. The continued use of TITO as a booking system for seminars, courses, and webinars has proven to be highly effective. The platform operates smoothly and reliably, enabling information to be gathered accurately and efficiently, while also allowing for clear and timely communication with attendees. Its ease of use has supported both staff and members, contributing to well-organised events and a positive overall experience. In an era where digital communication is paramount, each of these channels is vital for disseminating information, fostering engagement with our members, and ensuring that our methods of interaction remain professional, secure, and efficient.

Over the past year, we have transitioned away from using Zoom and now make regular use of Microsoft Teams to arrange meetings with members, as well as for the majority of Sub-Committee meetings. This change has provided a more

REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES

integrated and secure platform for communication, improved accessibility for participants, and allowed for more efficient collaboration and document sharing across the organisation.

Our membership database continues to evolve, with ongoing refinements made throughout the year to enhance both efficiency and usability. The recent changes to Teacher Reference Numbers were implemented seamlessly, ensuring accuracy and continuity with no disruption to services or communications. The database remains fully up to date and continues to perform exceptionally well, allowing for reliable, secure, and effective management of member information. While we continue to explore alternative database options as part of good governance and forward planning, we remain confident that the current system is robust and highly effective in sorting and categorising members, including teachers, students, and retirees, and in supporting the operational needs of the Union.

Our use of Microsoft 365 continues to underpin day-to-day operations across UTU. During the past year, we have trialled the use of SharePoint with the Central Executive Committee (CEC) as a secure and efficient means of sharing documents. This has enabled key papers, important dates, and essential information to be accessed quickly and consistently, improving communication, supporting collaboration, and strengthening information security.

As part of our ongoing programme of hardware renewal, we have recently purchased two new desktop computers and printers. This investment has helped to improve performance, reliability, and efficiency, ensuring that staff have access to modern, dependable equipment to support their work.

Following careful consideration, new telephone systems have been installed across the office. As part of this upgrade, the internet telephony provider was changed and broadband capacity was increased, resulting in improved reliability and call quality.

The transition was carried out smoothly and professionally, with no disruption to the day-to-day running of the office. The effectiveness of the new system was demonstrated when the office operated remotely during the amber weather warning associated with Storm Chandra, where communication continued without difficulty.

A special note of appreciation goes to Tony for his outstanding graphic design expertise, and to Meriel and Denise for their meticulous work in maintaining and overseeing the accuracy and integrity of our membership database. Their professionalism and attention to detail continue to be invaluable. I would also like to sincerely thank all staff members who have been willing to engage with, trial, and adopt new technologies throughout the year, often alongside existing responsibilities. In addition, my thanks go to the members of the ICT Sub-Committee for their continued advice, guidance, and practical solutions. Collectively, these contributions have been instrumental in ensuring that our ICT systems remain secure, efficient, and responsive to the evolving needs of our members.

EDUCATION AND POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE - Stephen McCord, *Convener*

The Education and Policy Sub-Committee is comprised of officers of the Union, elected members of the Central Executive Committee, alongside elected representatives from each of the five Area Associations, as well as co-opted members who bring additional expertise from specialist sectors of education. The Committee reflects a broad range of professional experience, drawing on members from different settings, sectors, and Key Stages, ensuring that a wide spectrum of perspectives informs its work. The Committee meets regularly, and as required, in response to emerging educational issues and policy developments. During the past year, the Education and Policy Sub-Committee has met on numerous occasions to respond to a significant number of consultations and calls for evidence. This has included responses to the Children and Young People Consultation on 16–18 Legislation; the consultation document on Strengthening Inspection Legislation for Schools and Other Education and Training Establishments; a call for evidence for the Independent Review of Statutory Key Stage Assessment; the consultation on the establishment of a new organisation to support controlled schools; a call for evidence on the proposal for a Bill on the right to choose to wear trousers in school; and the call for evidence on Primary Legislation for the General Teaching Council Bill from the Committee for Education.

In each response, the Committee ensured that the professional voice of teachers of the Union remained central. Contributions reflected the realities of classroom practice and the diverse contexts in which our members work. Teachers are at the forefront of educational delivery, and the Committee consistently emphasised the importance of meaningful engagement with educators when shaping legislation and policy that directly impacts schools, staff, and pupils.

The Convener extends sincere thanks and appreciation to all members of the Education and Policy Sub-Committee for their continued commitment, professionalism, and willingness to share their expertise and experience. Their thoughtful contributions have been invaluable in ensuring that the Union's responses remain informed, balanced, and firmly grounded in the lived experience of teachers.

RULES AND CONSTITUTION SUB-COMMITTEE - Jacquie White, *Convener*

The Rules and Constitution Sub-Committee is comprised of the officers of the Union, together with Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary. The Committee met once during the year to consider the rule changes arising from Conference 2025. These changes have now been fully incorporated into the Rules and Constitution of the Union.

The Committee also took the opportunity to review and update the format of the document to improve clarity, accessibility, and ease of use. Following consideration and approval by the Central Executive Committee, the revised Rules and Constitution have now been published on the UTU website.



REPORTS FROM CEC SUB-COMMITTEES

POLITICAL AND EQUALITY- Pauline Hurst, Convener

The Political and Equality Sub-Committee convened several times over the year to advocate for the rights, well-being, and professional voice of teachers across Northern Ireland.

Throughout the past year, the Sub-Committee submitted evidence-based responses to key consultations, including:

- The proposal for a new organisation to support controlled schools
- The Labour Relations Agency Corporate Plan 2025–2029
- The Department for Communities' Disability and Work: A Strategy for Northern Ireland
- The Northern Ireland Executive Disability Strategy
- EA Equality Action Plan

These submissions demonstrate the union's commitment to fairness, inclusion, and strong advocacy for the teaching profession.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all Sub-Committee members for their time, insights, and dedication. Your efforts have strengthened our collective voice and ensured that teachers' experiences are prioritised in policy discussions.

EDITORIAL - Janice Mullan, Convener

The first edition of our newly rebranded magazine ShoUT Union was emailed to all members in September 2025. Thank you for all your positive feedback about the electronic format which allowed the inclusion of web addresses and hyperlinks. The second edition was sent out in December 2025. Thoughts are now turning to the Spring 2026 edition.

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, Convener

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, routine general maintenance was carried out to upkeep the building. 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.

Our gardener continues to maintain the garden and lawns around the building. In December, pruning of the trees and hedges at the front of the property was undertaken and a fir tree, which had been identified as dangerous, was taken down.

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 co-operation of our neighbours. The tree will be replaced with a native species in due course.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY - Janice Mullan, Convener

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 members' art competition to showcase the talents of our members. There was also the 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 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 £4500 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.

LAW AND TENURE

Over the past year, UTU Officials have been constantly engaged in a wide variety of casework. Their reports are presented to CEC each month and are summarised below. 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.

GOVERNANCE

UTU continues to support both teacher and principal members who are experiencing a wide range of challenges relating to school governance. In several cases, agreed TNC documents are not being fully implemented, and there have been instances where Chairs of Boards of Governors have delayed or not carried out their responsibilities as required. We remain particularly concerned about the extended timeframes associated with certain procedures, this undoubtedly impacts members. While we fully acknowledge and value the voluntary commitment of Board of Governors members, we encourage all involved to adhere to agreed, reasonable timescales and to ensure their duties are fulfilled in accordance with equality legislation.

ATTACKS ON STAFF FROM PUPILS AND PARENTS

There continues to be a deeply concerning pattern of attacks on our members from pupils, parents, and, in some cases, third parties. Within school settings, incidents of both verbal abuse and physical assault against staff are now being reported with disturbing regularity. These incidents are not isolated; they reflect a growing trend that is placing significant strain on the wellbeing, confidence, and professional security of teachers and school leaders.

We are increasingly supporting members who have been subjected to hostile or threatening behaviour from parents, leaving individuals shaken and, in many cases, experiencing a lasting impact on their professional esteem. Such incidents undermine the safe and respectful working environment that all school staff are entitled to expect. In addition, growing pressures stemming from social media posts, the misuse of AI generated content, and the rapid spread of misinformation through WhatsApp groups are contributing to heightened stress and anxiety among staff and school leaders.

UTU continues to insist that the agreed TNC procedures for recording and reporting attacks on staff are followed consistently across all schools. Accurate and timely reporting is essential not only for ensuring appropriate support for affected staff, but also for building a comprehensive and reliable evidence base to inform future negotiations and safeguarding measures. Despite the existence of clear guidance, there remains a lack of uniform implementation, and this must be addressed as a matter of priority.

UTU remains fully committed to ensuring that all incidents are properly documented and that schools meet their responsibility to protect staff from abuse, intimidation, and violence. When necessary, the Union Solicitor has been engaged to support members.

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES IN SCHOOL

UTU officials continue to manage a broad spectrum of workplace relationship concerns across schools. These issues arise not only between governors and staff but also within leadership structures, between teachers themselves, and between teaching and support staff.

Over the past year, we have received numerous reports of behaviour that is both troubling and wholly unacceptable, highlighting once again the shortcomings of the current policy framework—particularly TNC 2009/11—which is no longer adequate for the realities faced in today's schools. UTU remains actively engaged with employers in reviewing and updating this document to ensure it reflects the needs and expectations of the profession.

The nature and scale of the issues raised vary significantly, ranging from individual interpersonal disputes to situations where almost the entire staff have voiced concerns about bullying or inappropriate conduct by a particular individual. Because each case must be submitted separately, multiple parallel cases are now emerging within single schools, a trend that is becoming increasingly common. UTU continues to call for a clearer, more robust, and transparent process from the Education Authority (EA) to ensure that governance and management behaviours are dealt with effectively and consistently.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

UTU officials continue to see a rise in members seeking support for sickness, attendance, and wellbeing-related matters. Many of these concerns relate to illness—both short-term and long-term—and the impact this is having on members' ability to carry out their roles. Work related stress also remains a significant issue for teachers and school leaders, with UTU regularly providing guidance and reassurance to those affected.

Officials are frequently supporting members who have been called to attendance management meetings, ensuring they understand their rights, entitlements, and the agreed procedures that should guide these processes. The number of ill health retirement cases has remained broadly consistent with last year; however, a positive development has been the improved turnaround time for these applications, which has reduced the level of uncertainty and stress experienced by those awaiting decisions.

LAW AND TENURE

UTU's ongoing campaigning around disability rights and the implementation of reasonable adjustments has contributed to more successful and sustainable returns to work following periods of absence. Ensuring that members receive the support and accommodations they require continues to be a central focus of this work.

A matter of growing concern in recent months has been the change in Occupational Health provider for the Education Authority. Members have reported delays and inconsistencies in the new system, and UTU has raised these issues directly with the EA to ensure that the service meets the needs of staff and does not hinder effective case management.

DISABILITY Information and guidance on reasonable adjustments are now available on the UTU website, and members are increasingly coming forward at an earlier stage to seek support. For many, the assistance provided—whether through adjustments to working practices, equipment, or redeployment—has been both effective and greatly appreciated. A number of members have also been successfully redeployed where this has been the most appropriate outcome.

However, a small number of cases persist where reasonable adjustments have been refused or inadequately addressed by schools. In such circumstances, UTU continues to work closely with the EA Disability Employment Support Service and other relevant agencies to ensure members receive the support to which they are entitled.

SALARIES AND CONTRACT ISSUES

While schools continue to face financial pressures, UTU remains clear that budget constraints cannot be used to deny teachers their contractual entitlements. Encouragingly, issues relating to Directed Time Budgets have declined this year, with the vast majority of our members now having appropriate and compliant time budgets in place. However, some members continue to experience increased workload pressures, and because each situation is unique, UTU officials address these matters on a case by case basis through the appropriate negotiation channels.

There have also been instances where members have had pay withheld or delayed without justification. In such cases, UTU officials raise the matter formally through the established mechanisms to ensure entitlements are honoured. Where these efforts do not lead to a satisfactory resolution, the union will seek advice from our solicitor to determine the next steps.

UTU remains fully committed to safeguarding members' pay, workload protections, and contractual rights, and will continue to challenge any practices that undermine these fundamental entitlements.

LEGAL CASES

UTU continues its long standing partnership with Shean Dickson Merrick Solicitors, ensuring members receive expert legal representation when required. This year has again seen an increase in the number of child protection cases involving UTU members, some of which involved PSNI. As a result, the Union Solicitor has been instructed a number of times to support and represent members throughout these highly sensitive and often distressing processes.

UTU officials, alongside the Union Solicitor, have attended numerous PSNI interviews under caution, providing essential guidance and reassurance to members facing serious allegations. While many cases ultimately do not progress beyond the initial investigation stage and are referred to schools for internal procedures, UTU continues to offer robust representation at every step. In a smaller number of cases, matters have moved further through the legal system, with some resolved and others proceeding toward formal hearings.

UTU remains deeply appreciative of the professionalism and commitment of its officials and legal partners, whose work ensures that every member receives fair, thorough, and compassionate support during what can be the most challenging periods of their professional lives.

NITPS SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD

PENSIONS

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme Advisory Board (NITPSAB) meets on a quarterly basis. UTU is represented on the NITPSAB by Joseph Wyglendacz, UTU Official and Jacquie White, General Secretary.

PENSION APPLICATIONS

Members are reminded that the notice period for accessing pension benefits has increased from three to four months in advance of their intended retirement date, in order to help ensure payment is made on time.

Following the substantial delays affecting a large number of pension applications, the Teachers' Pay and Pensions Team (TPPT) at DE has indicated that performance has improved significantly over 2025, with only five pension applications processed outside the agreed time limits. Staff that were employed on the McCloud remedy team are now being redeployed into processing, as the McCloud work stream concludes.

QUERIES FROM UTU MEMBERS

UTU members continue to report difficulties contacting staff within Teachers' Pay and Pensions (TPPT). These reports are supported by departmental data on calls received and answered.

Some steps have been taken within TPPT to improve staffing levels. A business case for 20 additional posts has been approved by DE Senior Management. Staff at DP, SO and EOI grades are now in post, and start dates have been confirmed for a number of EOI staff, although the exact figure has not been specified. Agency staff are currently in place to supplement staffing and cover vacancies, and there are plans to recruit a further nine staff at AO grade.

ANNUAL BENEFIT STATEMENTS (ABS)

Annual Benefit Statements are now available through the Teachers' Pension Portal, providing members with online access to details of their accrued pension benefits. The UTU has consulted its financial advisers, Platinum Financial Planning, regarding apparent inaccuracies reported to the Office by members. These concerns relate primarily to benefit calculations and recorded service details. Members who identify discrepancies in their statements are encouraged to raise the matter promptly to ensure that any necessary corrections can be investigated and addressed in a timely manner.

Pensions Dashboard

The Pensions Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations 2023 set out the requirement for pension schemes to provide individuals with secure online access to their pension information in one place. The dashboards are intended to present clear, straightforward details of an individual's pension savings, including their State Pension, across multiple schemes.

The Pensions Regulator has confirmed a connection deadline of 31 October 2025 for Public Service Pension Schemes, including NITPS. However, the development of the dashboard ISP connection has encountered compatibility issues which may impact the agreed connection date. The NITPS dashboard system provider has been notified and is working to address these issues.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTION RATES 2025/26

DE Circular 2026/11 sets out changes from 01 April 2026 to salary bands for contribution rates for members of the NITPS.

- On 01 April 2026, the salary bands applicable to member contributions for the NITPS will change in line with an increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- The appropriate percentage increase to salary bands from 01 April 2026 is the same percentage as the percentage increase in CPI in the year to September 2025.
- CPI rose by 3.8% in the year to September 2025, therefore, the salary bands for contribution rates for members will increase by 3.8% with effect from 01 April 2026.

These arrangements apply to all members.

Member tiered contribution rates for the NITPS from 01 April 2026 are shown below with the previous rates for comparison:

Actual annual pensionable earnings* 01 April 25 - 31 March 26	Actual annual pensionable earnings* 01 April 26 - 31 March 27	Member Contribution Rate
Up to £34,872.99	Up to £36,198.99	7.40%
£34,873 to £46,943.99	£36,199 to £48,727.99	8.87%
£46,944 to £55,660.99	£48,728 to £57,776.99	9.90%
£55,661 to £73,768.99	£57,777 to £76,572.99	10.52%
£73,769 to £100,590.99	£76,573 to £104,413.99	11.65%
£100,591 and above	£104,414 and above	12.06%

*Contributions are based on a member's annual salary rate (actual earnings)

SCHEME VALUATION

Under the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the associated Scheme regulations, there is a legal requirement to carry out a valuation every four years. This process assesses the overall cost of providing scheme benefits and measures the impact of the cost control mechanism. As part of this regular assessment of the cost of paying benefits, member contributions and/or scheme benefits may be adjusted as necessary to ensure the scheme remains within the established cost parameters.

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) provided a training session for the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme Advisory Board meeting on the 3rd of February 2026, ahead to the new valuation to come. Delivered by: Garth Foster FIA C.Act and Andrew McGlashon FIA C.Act.

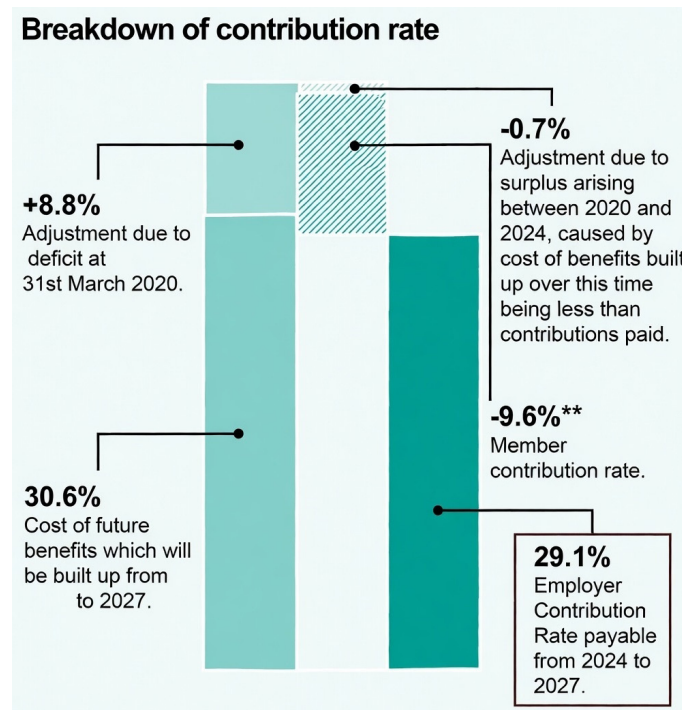
The process for setting scheme-specific assumptions begins with GAD analysing scheme experience data and preparing an initial set of recommended "scheme-set" assumptions. GAD then discusses these recommendations with DENI and subsequently with the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme Advisory Board (SAB). Following these discussions, GAD presents its final recommended assumptions to DENI. DENI then determines the assumptions to be used in the valuation calculations and formally notifies GAD of its decision. The purpose of these discussions is to review the recommended assumptions to ensure they are reasonable and appropriately reflect scheme experience, and to provide stakeholders



NITPS SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD

with an opportunity to highlight any additional relevant information that may influence or inform the final recommendations.

The finalised valuation results for the 2020 scheme for NITPS confirm an employer contribution rate of 29.1%, resulting from the SCAPE discount rate change, with effective from 01 April 2024. Increased costs to be funded by HM Treasury and proportional funding via Barnett consequential to be provided to devolved administrations.



RISK REGISTER

A risk register is updated regularly to ensure that all risks to the teachers' pension scheme are identified, monitored and addressed in a timely manner.

OPT OUT DATA

The number of teachers opting out of the Teachers' Pension scheme in Northern Ireland remains low with no discernible trends apparent and to date has given no cause for concern.

TEACHERS PAY AND PENSIONS TEAM OFFICE

The Department of Finance continues to attempt to reduce estate costs by reducing the number of civil service offices. As a result, TPPT have now moved from their long-standing offices in Waterside House and are now based in Orchard House – that is situated in the city of Londonderry.

LEGISLATION

MCCLLOUD

The McCloud judgment arises from a decision of the Court of Appeal of England and Wales which found that the Government's 2015 public service pension reforms unlawfully discriminated against certain members on the basis of age. The discrimination relates to the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the "remedy period").

In response, the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) has implemented a "deferred choice underpin". This allows affected members, when they come to access their pension benefits, to choose whether their service during the remedy period is treated as membership in their legacy scheme or in the reformed scheme. All necessary legislation to give effect to these changes is now in place.

In practical terms, members who apply for pension benefits will, following submission of the TP4 pension application form, receive:

- A letter explaining the deferred choice options;
- An updated statement of benefits setting out the pension payable under each option; and
- A final choice form to be completed and returned to TPPT.

Members who retired before the relevant legislation was enacted have been, or will be, contacted by TPPT and provided with an immediate choice underpin option. This is intended to remedy any financial detriment suffered as a result of the discrimination identified in the McCloud judgment

The Goodwin case established that male survivors of opposite-sex marriages and civil partnerships were treated less favourably than survivors in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships under public service pension schemes.

Scheme rules will be amended to ensure that a male spouse or civil partner of a female member is treated in the same way as a same-sex spouse or civil partner. Under the revised approach, survivor benefits will be calculated using reckonable service from 1 April 1972, or from 6 April 1978 where the marriage or civil partnership took place after the member's last day of pensionable service.

This change will apply in respect of deaths of female members occurring on or after 5 December 2005, the date on which same-sex civil partnerships were introduced.

In the interim, the Department of Education (DE) has indicated that it will consider applying the policy intent of the revised rules in any priority cases that arise before the formal amendments are completed.

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, the President is currently Phil Ni Sheaghdha of INMO and the Vice-Presidents are Katie Morgan of Forsa and Jacquie White of UTU. The Executive Council meets monthly in Dublin.

Issues under consideration monthly include:

- Economic and Social Policy incorporating updates from Mr Tom McDonnell and Mr Paul McFlynn, both of the Nevin Economic Research Institute, on the current status North and South
- Reports from committees representing the public and private sector
- Trade Union Organisation Renewal
- The work of Trades Councils
- Industrial Disputes
- International issues

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 represented NIC at meetings with a range of local politicians including the Minister for the Economy, Dr Caoimhe Archibald, met with Officials of the NIO, sits on the Engagement Forum which brings together representatives from the Labour Relations Agency, the employer bodies and unions, and addressed a range of events and conferences including the ICTU Women's Conference and the Global Solidarity Summer School. Central to the work of the NIC/ICTU this year has been the lobbying work towards delivering the Good Jobs Employment Bill; the shaping of the Bill began with the previous Minister for the Economy, Conor Murphy, in 2024 and has continued under the current Minister, Dr Caoimhe Archibald.

Key for former Minister Conor Murphy was what he called his '**Good Jobs Agenda**' which comprised the four aspects of a Good Job, as defined by the Carnegie Framework. These are: terms of employment;

pay and benefits; voice and representation; and promoting a healthy work-life balance.

Below are what NIC-ICTU, after detailed work with employment law experts and practitioners across our movement, defines as the key aspects of this new legislation:

- Promotion by NI Executive departments and statutory agencies of collective bargaining.
- Access for workers to join trade unions and a right of access for a trade union representative to access a workplace.
- Simplification of the process of have a trade union recognised to represent workers in a workplace.
- Protections for trade union representatives including the right to take official industrial action free from the fear of dismissal or victimisation.
- Statutory rights for trade union equalities representatives.
- Electronic ballots for union elections and industrial action.
- A single employment status category of 'worker' with the same floor of employment rights and protections currently enjoyed by those designated as employees from day one.
- A right to seek flexible working arrangements.
- Replacing zero-hours contracts by requiring employers to provide guaranteed contractual hours per week.
- Clearer employment contracts and itemised payslips.
- Public procurement to improve employment models.
- Preventing fire & re-hire.
- Reform of employment tribunals.
- A new single enforcement body to transform the fragmented labour enforcement system and prevent labour exploitation by providing end-to-end protection for workers.
- A comprehensive review of work life balance measures.
- Strengthened flexible leave entitlements as well as access to family leaves (maternity, paternity, parental, carers leave, bereavement leave/s).
- A right to disconnect.

Whilst the premise of the Bill appeared to be welcomed across all political parties in the first instance, subsequent campaigning by some business groups seeks to obstruct the way forward. NIC/ICTU representatives continue to lobby across parties to counteract these attempts to undermine what could prove to be legislation which would deliver significant benefits for workers here, particularly those in low paid and precarious work.

The work is underpinned by the excellent research emerging from the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) and support has been shown for the Bill, through the latest LucidTalk Poll, by the majority of voters across all political persuasions.

Campaigning for a comprehensive new Employment Bill remains a key priority for NIC-ICTU during the remainder of the mandate of the NI Assembly, which ends in May 2027.

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 all-island ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference took place in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast from the 1st to 3rd July 2025. UTU delegates at the BDC were: Lynelle Fenton, Immediate Past President, Jon Bleakney, Vice-President, Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary, Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer, Jacquie White, General Secretary and Alison Steen (CEC). UTU delegates spoke on a range of issues including sexual harassment in the workplace, access to health care and the demise of post offices in rural communities.

In keeping with tradition, it was the turn of the teaching unions in Northern Ireland to host a reception for those from the Republic of Ireland and this took place in the Europa Hotel.

A dinner also took place hosted by NASUWT to congratulate Justin McCamphill on his very successful term as President.

The election for the new ICTU Committee was held prior to the Congress and Jacquie White subsequently took up the position of Vice-President 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. UTU has representation across these committees.

The following have been key issues this year.

EDUCATION TRADE UNION GROUP (ETUG)

The NIC-ICTU ETUG group comprises most of the teaching Unions and all support staff Unions: Ulster Teachers' Union, INTO, NASUWT, NAHT, NIPSA, UNISON, GMB and Unite the Union. The current Chair is Marie O'Shea of INTO. 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.

The group meets regularly to develop education policy matters for the NI trade union movement. It lobbies policymakers as well as the public and is a useful hub of information across unions, both in outlining the effects of budget cuts and co-ordinating support for unions taking industrial action.

The ETUG, due to its wide representation of education here, has been called to brief the NI Assembly Education Committee and topics have included Free School Meals for every child, a UK-wide campaign led by Unison, and tackling racism in schools.



IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

ETUG was further engaged in challenging the Education Minister, Paul Givan, on his proposals for a new Managing Authority to support the controlled schools' sector. Concerns raised by ETUG included the lack of prior notification of the staff unions in EA, the Minister's description of the EA as failing controlled schools without providing any context or taking account of years of underfunding, and the failure of the Chief Executive of the EA to defend the organisation.

In late 2024, there was a serious incident at a school in north Belfast involving children from a refugee background which escalated into serious community tensions. This prompted discussion involving the NIC-ICTU's education unions and members of Belfast City of Sanctuary to seek a way forward. The ICTU Anti-Racism Project Officer was also involved and offered practical advice to support engagement with external groups and officials, as well as informing the Congress Trade Union Education Programme. ETUG unions held a series of meetings involving our affiliates who represent support staff as well as teachers and are engaged in identifying where the present system of managing incidents involving ethnic and racial differences is working and, crucially, failing students and staff alike.

ETUG engaged with the Education Authority NI and Department of Education to catalogue the resources available for a school which finds itself in a similar situation as that school.

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 Rebekka Gilpin, UTU Official.

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.

Work focuses on current issues such as consultations issued by the NI Assembly, societal issues as they impact on women and means by which lobbying can be carried out and awareness can be raised. Individual unions share work going on in their contexts and these are supported and adopted by others as appropriate.

Issues this year have included:

- Gender Pay Gap consultation
- Women's health, disability and reasonable adjustments
- Childcare
- Misogyny vs Toxic masculinity: new legislation and bystander interventions
- The White Ribbon campaign to involve men in combatting gender-based violence
- ADHD and the impact on women.
- Pregnancy loss
- Sexual harassment women's network
- Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls Strategy Executive Office
- Good Jobs Bill in relation to women
- The progress of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (NI) 2022 consultation

The Women's Committee held an event at Stormont on 25th November 2025 to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the beginning of the 16 days of activism. The event focused on lobbying for the delivery of the Safe Leave Act and was addressed by the Minister for the Economy.

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.

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The ICTU Women's Conference is scheduled to take place on 20th and 21st March 2026. The theme is Achieving for Women in Work: A New Economic Model for Women Workers.

21 motions will be brought before the Conference by the Women's Committee, affiliate unions and Trades' Councils on a range of issues relating to women's working lives, health and treatment in the workplace.

The ICTU Women's Conference has an advisory role to ICTU and outcomes are taken into account when shaping wider ICTU policy.

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, is scheduled to take place on the 2nd and 3rd July 2026.

It is the turn of the Women's Committee in the Republic of Ireland to host and consideration is already being given to the topics to be addressed by the NI Women's Committee.

ICTU GLOBAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

The Global Solidarity Committee meet regularly with an option to join remotely. A wide range of global solidarity related topics are discussed at meetings. A range of topics are explored at meetings. The summer school took place in Newry in August 2025 where Jacquie White, as Chair of NIC/ICTU addressed delegates.

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The NIC ICTU Health and Safety Committee meet on a regular basis. Already this year there have been a number of issues raised that impact our teachers in schools. The HSE NI recently updated members on Air Quality in the Workplace. Workers Memorial Day is organised and supported by the members of the sub committee. Planning is also underway for a local Health and Safety Conference in the coming months.

RALLIES

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

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.

Some of 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.

Some key issues emerging this year which have reflected the situation we face here have been the lack of provision of services for children with special and additional needs, teacher workload and the health and safety of teachers, both in the classroom and on-line.

These, as you will be well aware, are all areas in which work is on-going here between NITC and the relevant bodies and the opportunities to learn about the successes and otherwise in other jurisdictions is invaluable in informing the work for our own teaching workforce.

TEACHING UNION CONFERENCES

The Annual Conferences of sister teaching unions throughout the various jurisdictions were attended by the President, Vice-President, Immediate Past-President, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary and CEC representatives as appropriate. UTU was invited – and warmly welcomed by – the following teaching unions.

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

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

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

EIS: Education Institute of Scotland

SSTA: Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

TUI: Teachers' Union of Ireland

IFUT: Irish Federation of University Teachers

ASTI: Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

NAHT: National Association of Head Teachers

JOINT INTO, NEU, AND UTU BOARD

The Ulster Teachers' Union (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, Deputy General Secretary, Rebekka Gilpin and Joseph Wyglendacz.

Joint student recruitment activities continued throughout the year, with targeted engagement events held at Ulster University (Coleraine), Queen's University Belfast, Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College. In addition, the three unions collaborated to deliver a comprehensive programme of training for school representatives, health and safety representatives, and school leaders. The joint INTO,

NEU and UTU YouTube channel also remains an important platform for communication, outreach and ongoing professional engagement.

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 21 May 2025 at the ASTI Offices in Dublin and the General Secretaries reconvened on 3 December 2025 at UCU in London.

Items discussed in the May meeting included:

- Reports on the latest work of Education International/ETUCE
- ISTP (reported below)
- TUAC (reported below)

Teachers' pay issues and activity in 2025 across the jurisdictions

EI/ETUCE

The EU's consultation on a route map to women's rights was reported with reference being made to how progress on closing the gender pay gap had been disrupted and that enacting the EU principles on gender equality met many stumbling blocks. The meeting had discussed the discrepancy between the professional salaries of male and female dominated professions despite EU directives, and that many employers' groups had been lobbying against implementation of measures to address the teacher shortage crisis.

The demands from special and inclusive education which lacked essential supports were also having a disproportionate impact on the workload of female education workers who often have additional caring duties outside of the workplace, requiring the application of gender-impact assessments on ASN (SEN) policies. The dysregulated behaviour of students with additional needs poses health and safety risks to teachers the majority of whom are women. It was felt that the Council of Europe should be lobbied about these issues, with members suggesting that BIGTU may wish to consider this route.

It was further reported that the first in-person meeting of the new bureau under the stewardship of the new director debated strategic direction for ETUCE and its need to focus on core priorities and align its projects with key goals, with closer alignment with EI also being key. The meeting agreed that it was important for ETUCE to make EI campaigns like the 'Go Public, Fund Education' campaign as relevant as possible to the European context and in that regard it was hoped to convene a series of regional meetings within Europe, the first of which for the Southern European region was taking place in Athens.

ETUCE had also discussed far right threats to democracy, equality issues, capacity building, the importance of networks and the need for the bureau to narrow down its key priorities.

EI / AI

Education International hosted its first Global Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Brussels on 4–5 December, bringing together over 200 union leaders, educators and experts, with a similar number joining online. The conference was attended by Stephen McCord DGS. It explored how AI is reshaping education and work, and how unions can ensure these technologies support—rather than undermine—the teaching profession, public education and democracy. Building on EI's ongoing work and recent World Congress resolutions, the event reinforced the call for a human-centred, ethical and rights-based approach to AI that ensures transparency, equity, quality, and safeguards the essential role of educators.

ISTP (INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION)

The ISTP took place in Reykjavik in March 24-26, 2025.

In order for a country/jurisdiction to attend, the Minister of Education in that context must also attend, and Northern Ireland was represented by Mark McTaggart, Northern Secretary of INTO, and Minister Givan.

25 countries including the four UK nations attended. It was reported that affiliates who attended enjoyed the event and tribute was paid to the Icelandic hosts. All agreed that the opportunities provided for them to engage with Ministers and Department Officials on neutral territory were very worthwhile with Northern Ireland being particularly pleased about the emergence of an independent review of teacher workload shortly afterwards, something that helped settle the long pay dispute there.



TEACHER UNITY

It was agreed that the structured meeting on EI's 'Opportunities, Guidelines and Guardrails for Effective Use of AI in Education' was helpful but further work would now have to be done on this topic with refreshed guidelines to be issued. The discussion on early years education was successful too. Reports on the three objectives set by each nation present will be shared.

As we go to press the Jacquie White General Secretary is in attendance representing NITC at this year's ISTP summit in Estonia. The Summit theme "Switching gears: Teachers and Learners in the Future Learning Environment," will explore the pivotal role that teachers play in shaping future-ready education systems.

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 15 – 16 May 2025 with a further meeting taking place on 18 December 2025. UTU was represented by the Deputy General Secretary, Stephen McCord, and the President, Janice Mullan in the first meeting, and by the President and General Secretary in the second.

Larry Flanagan, Chair of the TUAC Working Group on Education and Skills, presided over the events. The following outlines the areas which were under discussion.

The May meeting provided updates on Further and Higher Education, work intensification, teacher shortages, curriculum management and the negative impact of pressurised external examination systems on students with additional needs.

The agenda for the December meeting featured discussions of the results of the OECD's 2024 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the 2025 edition of Education At A Glance and the Skills Outlook 2025. The OECD also presented a new framework for assessing skills and knowledge relating to artificial intelligence as well as ongoing work on higher education, adult learning and approaches to upper secondary certification.

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.

BIGTU WORK

The Future of Examinations

The BIGTU unions have held a number of seminars to share practice and developments in the examinations arena. The group of officials and education officers had a very worthwhile meeting in September in Scotland. Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary, gave a presentation on the status and proposals for examinations in NI, with other jurisdictions presenting about changes in their contexts. Based on the information shared, the group is planning next steps.

It was suggested that a similar approach to Artificial Intelligence might be beneficial and that the North South Education Forum in Ireland was contemplating organising a seminar on this topic. Some initial discussion took place with the TUC at the December meeting regarding the work they have already commenced in AI and other potential areas of collaboration for the future.

Reports from regions

Updates were given in May and December and the latest status of the various jurisdictions, as of December 2025, is as follows:

IRELAND

Under the PSA 2024-2026 teachers received increases of 2% or €1000 (whichever was greater) in March 2025 and a further 1% in August 2025. The agreement is expected to run until 30 June 2026 with 4 further increases due next year, 1% or €500 whichever is greater from 1 February and another 1% from 1 June 2026. Negotiations on local bargaining between unions and the Department of Education and Youth have been painstakingly slow even though the first payment date was 1 September 2025. The DEY overspent by half a billion euro this year, which may explain the delayed negotiations. It is now anticipated that union claims will be settled in the new year with arrears to September 2025.

Negotiations on a successor public service agreement are expected to commence next Summer.

SCOTLAND

The pay of Scottish teachers is guaranteed for 2026/27 but there is a major dispute on teacher workload. Scottish unions use ROI teacher salaries as their barometer and all other regions within the UK use Scottish salaries as their barometer! The unions have secured a 'volatility' clause in the negotiations. A review can be triggered in the event of inflationary pressures. Although agreement had been reached, local authorities should have paid settlements due from 1 August and there were residual issues relating to the negative impact of taxation changes on the arrears from the pay settlement of two years ago. From 12 November 2025 to 14 January 2026 EIS was holding a statutory ballot on teacher workload. The previous commitments to reduce teaching time to 21 contact hours have not been met and a recent paper on workload from the Scottish Government, circulated in advance to the media, is lacking substance and cohesion.

EIS campaigned successfully against redundancies at the University of the West of Scotland and have ballots at Edinburgh Napier University. They also continue pushing back against job losses at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, although no longer with a strike mandate.

ENGLAND

Evidence sessions were ongoing. Department was refusing to recognise the difficulty with the non-funded aspects of pay awards and the implications for school budgets. They were also failing to engage on supply teachers, open-ended contracts and agency staff.

The picture for Higher Education is catastrophic with 4,000 courses closed and 15,000 redundancies. Following a less than optimum (40%) result on a pay ballot, UCU is fully focused on saving jobs in the sector and very concerned about the levies on foreign students and the marginal student fee increases.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The NITC lodged a pay claim. Some funding has transferred to Stormont with pay negotiations expected to commence shortly. There is a possibility that future pay negotiations will have a multi-annual focus. A 4 % uplift is likely for 2025/26.

The Independent Review of Teacher Workload was published by Minister Givan on 1 December. Productive engagements have been happening between unions and management to address 26 areas of workload. Former chairperson of BIGTU Larry Flanagan was very influential on the independent panel. Meanwhile, challenging issues like Transformation Education NI, resourcing for SEN, Religious Education, the Minister's travels to Israel and various other Ministerial announcements were causing concern. Draft legislation to compel teachers to cooperate with inspections may not now be enacted.

As it was his last meeting in May, John Boyle, GS of INTO, paid a glowing tribute to Ex-Chairperson, Larry Flanagan, for his tireless work within the education sector at home and abroad and thanked him for his unstinting commitment to BIGTU through thick and thin. UTU fully supports this position. Larry responded by remarking on the importance of BIGTU at international level down the decades and wished the group much future success.

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 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 has met less frequently as the inspection process has been rolling out and becoming embedded, but further meetings will be scheduled soon to establish progress and direction of travel. Regular engagement with the Deputy Chief Inspectors by telephone or in person have still taken place to address specific or individual issues.

Nuala O'Donnell of INTO, who was the NITC lead, has carried out some excellent work in this area and will be sorely missed; we wish her every happiness for her retirement. Jacquie White, UTU, has replaced her as lead on this work.

ETI has published a number of reports in the last year with areas of focus ranging from early years to youth services to further education and apprenticeships. Within our area of education, reports have issued on Key Stage 2 Art and Design, the Statutory Assessment (Statementing) Process and Part 1 of Specialist Provisions in Mainstream Schools.

The Empowering Improvement II Programme for Senior Leaders Programme was delivered to cohorts of senior leaders from the primary, post-primary and FE and work-based learning phases and over 400 senior leaders participated. The Empowering Improvement Project 3 is now underway which prioritised the attendance of Induction and EPD 1 teachers in the first instance with almost 500 RQTs taking part.

Further, the Associate Assessor Programme was carried out comprising four Associate Assessor information sessions across: Early Years; Primary; Post-primary, Special and EOTAS; and Further Education & Work-based Learning.

The regular programme of school evaluation continued with data from questionnaires, analysed by NISRA, showing that 97% of responses (164) agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection

process helped plan for and empower improvement. 97% (160) also agreed or strongly agreed that they had been treated fairly by ETI and IST throughout the inspection process.

Feedback received by UTU in terms of participation in the inspection process has supported this data and we commend the ETI team for their commitment to delivering on the new framework which works in the interests of all.

Members of the Senior Leadership Team of ETI have also given very generously of their time in working to establish common messages and understanding in relation to the measures to address workload currently under development by TNC and we extend our appreciation to them for their involvement.

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 and is attended by UTU Officials and the President.

Topics have included:

- Specialist Provision in Mainstream (SPiM) Education
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework with TEO
- Update on RSE from NI Human Rights Commission.
- Restorative Practice
- Education Authority - Moving Forward - Three Year Communications Strategy
- Education Authority - Intercultural Education Service Review
- Mapping Far Right Activity Online in Northern Ireland Project Report - CAJ
- The All-Party Group (APG) inquiry on Mental Health Education and Early Intervention in Schools

The format of the meetings comprises presentations by relevant groups followed by a Q&A session exploring how the issues pertain to and are addressed in schools.

Presentation slides and reports are generally provided to participants following the meetings. If any member has a particular interest in any of the topics listed and would like further information, please contact UTU HQ.

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
- SEND Update
- Equality Update
- Review of Teaching Appointment Scheme
- Review of TAS June 2025
- Withdrawal of the essential car allowance
- Tackling misogyny in schools
- 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.

The Engagement Forum is attended by the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, Officials and the President as required.

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. Rebekka Gilpin, UTU, has represented NITC this year.

The following are issues which have been under consideration:

- Review of Terms of Reference of Education Safeguarding Forum Group
- Updates from Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)
- Update from Child Protection Support Service
- CPSS Annual Report and Statistics
- Safer Resourcing Update
- Vetting for contractors
- Domestic violence
- Information/Consultations
- Promoting Best Practice

These are highly sensitive topics and the team involved deal directly with schools in relation to individual situations.



ENGAGEMENT WITH EXTERNAL BODIES

Any member requiring further information should contact the General Secretary.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE (CYPS)

Meetings between NITC representatives and CYPS are well-established and provide unions with 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 2025, Tomas Addell replaced Dale Hanna as 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, monthly engagement meetings continued to place to discuss the SEND Transformation Process with a particular focus on the LITs.

Issues discussed this year included: SEN Capacity Programme, including Special Schools & SPIMs, SEND Transformation Programme, including LITs, SEN Allowances and Terms and Conditions of teachers in the Support Services.

The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) was renamed as the SEND and Youth Directorate in late 2025. This directorate now has responsibility for Youth Services, SEND Statutory and Educational Psychology Services, SEND Local IMPACT Teams, Special Schools and Specialist Provisions and SEND Transformation Programme.

SEN CAPACITY PROGRAMME

By September 2025, the majority of pupils with a Statement of SEN had been allocated placements. To support those still awaiting placement, additional special provision has been established. For the 2025–26 school year, a total of 1,374 new SEN places were created. This includes 29 new classes in Special Schools and 128 specialist provision classes in mainstream settings. However, significant work remains for the 2026–27 year, as demand continues to rise.

SPECIALIST PROVISION

Currently, only 26% of mainstream schools in Northern Ireland provide specialist provision, and this percentage will need to rise to meet growing system demands. The Education Authority has continued to engage with schools, both in person and virtually, regarding the establishment of Specialist Provision units.

The UTU maintains that resourcing levels need to accurately reflect the needs of both the identified schools and the children and young people placed in their care.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

TUS has continued to support teachers within EA Support Services on a range of issues, such as permanency, time budgets, the establishment of Local Impact Teams, workload and changes to car user allowances.

The UTU, alongside colleagues from INTO, NEU and NASUWT, has met on a monthly basis to address ongoing concerns regarding the changes being introduced within the Support Services and the resulting impact on both our members in the support services and schools. The UTU also facilitated several meetings with members in the Support Services to provide updates and get feedback regarding the changes to the service.

LOCAL IMPACT TEAMS

The SEND Local Impact Team, model has been operational as of September 2025. This includes 20 school age and 8 early years teams, based at various locations in Northern Ireland and aligned with Health Trust boundaries. Many concerns have arisen as a result of this restructuring of the 8 separate legacy specialisms, including movement of some staff to different areas, members working on different contracts and terms and conditions within the LIT Teams, the introduction of SEND Central, administrative changes through the Rfl portal and the graduate response framework. The UTU is continuing to support colleagues within the EA support services through this time of rapid change and transformation, which has undoubtedly led to an increase in work-related stress and members expressing concerns about continuing changes to their legacy roles.

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.

There have been further discussions with NITC in regard to controlled assessments and engagement will take place moving forward in relation to the proposed reform of assessment in NI.

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.

This work has moved into the sphere of the measures for addressing workload with particular emphasis being placed on TNC 2011/2 Policy Statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour Against Teachers and the obligations for employers to record data.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

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

Topics dealt with included a range of SEN-related issues including placement of children, the role of the SENCo, support services and medical needs, school governance, proposed ETI legislation and GTCNI.

BENEVOLENT FUND

The UTU Benevolent Fund is here to offer compassionate support when it's needed most. It provides financial assistance to the spouse, partner, or close relatives of a member who sadly passes away while in service. In addition, the Fund can offer discretionary help to members experiencing financial hardship, ensuring they receive caring and confidential support tailored to their individual circumstances.

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

Alison Wilson – Coagh Primary School

Jacqui Neill – ETA

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



UTU PARTNERS

MANDI MILLAR

Since our last conference report, UTU has maintained a strong media presence, supported by the invaluable work of Mandi Millar, who ensured our voice was consistently heard across local and regional platforms. General Secretary Jacquie White and Deputy General Secretary Stephen McCord further strengthened our visibility through contributions on Radio Ulster, Radio Foyle, U105, Downtown and Cool FM, as well as on BBC Newsline, BBC Sunday Politics and UTV news. Mandi's dedication has been central to keeping UTU at the forefront of educational discussion, and we extend our sincere thanks for her ongoing commitment.

CORNMARKET INSURANCE SERVICE

UTU members continue to benefit from our longstanding partnership with Cornmarket Insurance Services. As our trusted provider, Cornmarket offers excellent value and tailored protection across car, home, motorbike and travel insurance, giving members peace of mind. Their ongoing support for UTU members—and their valued presence at our Annual Conference—demonstrates their continued commitment to serving the teaching community.

PLATINUM FINANCIAL PLANNING LTD.

Platinum Financial Planning has supported UTU members for over twenty years, offering extensive expertise across all areas of financial planning. Their knowledge of the Teachers' Pension Scheme remains exceptional, and this year they have provided invaluable assistance to members contacted regarding the McCloud Judgement and the impact it may have on them.

Our collaboration with INTO has continued to deliver well attended pension webinars, face to face seminars and mid career guidance sessions. Member feedback has been consistently positive, with many appreciating the clear, expert support offered as they navigate complex pension decisions.

We are grateful for the dedicated service Platinum Financial Planning provides to our members, helping them make informed and confident financial choices. We thank them for their ongoing commitment and look forward to the continued benefits of this partnership.

MEMBERSHIP PLUS

The Membership Plus card and app continues to be a highly valued benefit for UTU members, providing meaningful savings across restaurants, shops, hotels and leisure venues. We are very thankful for the ongoing work of the Membership Plus team in enabling our members to enjoy these discounts throughout the year.

Member uptake and usage remain strong, supported by the flexibility of using either the physical card or the convenient Membership Plus app. Feedback shows that the savings members make through regular use are significant and greatly appreciated, at times one purchase can make savings greater than a members monthly union subscription.

Members Membership Plus card will be renewed this September, and we look forward to continuing our positive partnership as we promote awareness and help members maximise the savings available to them.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

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

VICE-PRESIDENT

Jon Bleakney, BEd (Hons), Lakewood Special School

IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT

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

GENERAL SECRETARY

Jacque White, BEd, (Hons), PQH(NI), UTU Headquarters

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

Stephen McCord, BMedSc (Hons), MEd, PGCE, UTU Headquarters

HONORARY TREASURER

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

BELFAST AREA ASSOCIATION

Jaki Gargan, BEd (Hons), Glastry College

David Majury, BSc, PGCE, St Columbanus' College

Paul Smith, BSc (Hons), PGCE, PGCert, MEd, Earlview Primary School and Nursery

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Andrew Armstrong, BEd(Hons), PQH(NI), Dromara Primary School

Grace McCullough, BEd (Hons), MEd, Regent House School

Andrew Fee, BEd, Elmgrove Primary School

NORTH-EASTERN AREA ASSOCIATION

Jill Johnston, BSc (Hons), PGCE, Larne High School until August 2025, Victoria College Belfast from August 2025.

Estelle McCord, BA, MA (Distinction), PGCE, Larne High School

Lynn Robinson, BEd (Hons) ALCM, Ballymena Primary School

Jillian Jones, BEd (Hons), Drumrane Primary 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

Pauline Hurst, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Enniskillen Model Primary School

Alison Steen, BEd (Hons), PQHNI, Drumrane Primary School

OBSERVER

Aaron Davis, BEd (Hons), MEd, Knockevin Special School

Matthew Robinson, MStJ, BEd (Hons), St Columbanus College



ATTENDANCE AT CEC MEETINGS

POSSIBLE ATTENDANCES: Eight Meetings - Unless stated otherwise

OFFICERS

Janice Mullan, President	8
Jon Bleakney, Vice-President	8/
Lynelle Fenton, Ex-President	8

OFFICIAL/CLERICAL STAFF - in attendance

Jacquie White, General Secretary	8
Stephen McCord, Deputy General Secretary	8
Rebekka Gilpin, Field Officer	7
Joseph Wyglendacz, Organising Officer	6
Lindsay Osborne	7
Tony McCabe	5

HONORARY TREASURER

David Thompson	5
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BELFAST AREA

David Majury	3/4
Jaki Gargan	4
Paul Smith	3/4
Naomi Billington	0/4

NORTH-EASTERN AREA

Jill Johnston	8
Estelle McCord	8
Jillian Jones	7
Lynn Robinson	7

SOUTHERN AREA

Steven Savage	6
Aaron Davidson	6
Heather Wilson	6
Jill Ravey	7

SOUTH-EASTERN AREA

Andrew Fee	5
Andrew Armstrong	8
Grace McCullough	8

WESTERN AREA

Audrey Dempsey	7
Pauline Hurst	7
Alison Steen	8

OBSERVERS

Aaron Davis	4/6
Matthew Robinson	2/4

SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE C.E.C.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES

Janice Mullan, *President*
 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Audrey Dempsey
 Naomi Billington
 Heather Wilson
 Andrew Armstrong
 Jill Johnston

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*

EDUCATION AND POLICY

Janice Mullan, *President*
 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Audrey Dempsey
 Jaki Gargan
 Aaron Davidson
 Grace McCullough
 Jill Johnston
 Joy Carrothers
 Janet Burke
 Ashleigh Knox

Convener: Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*

SALARIES AND CONDITIONS

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

Convener: Jacquie White, *General Secretary*

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Janice Mullan
 Jon Bleakney
 Lynelle Fenton
 Jacquie White
 Joseph Wyglendacz
 Rebekka Gilpin
 Pauline Hurst
 Naomi Billington
 Heather Wilson
 Andrew Fee
 Eileen Barber
 Joy Carrothers
 Eileen Mckee
 David Gault

Convener: Pauline Hurst

ORGANISATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Janice Mullan, *President*
 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Rebekka Gilpin, *Field Officer*
 Joseph Wyglendacz, *Field Officer*
 Pauline Hurst
 Jaki Gargan
 Steven Savage
 Andrew Armstrong
 Estelle McCord
 Christina Farren
 Karen Atchison
 Ashleigh Knox

Convener: Rebekka Gilpin, *Field Officer*

CONFERENCE

Janice Mullan, *President*
 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Karen Taylor, *Executive Officer*
 Jaki Gargan
 Jill Ravey
 Andrew Armstrong
 Lynn Robinson
 Alison Steen

Convener: Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*

RULES AND CONSTITUTION

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

Convener: Jacquie White, *General Secretary*

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 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Rebekka Gilpin, *Field Officer*
 Alison Steen
 Naomi Billington
 Grace McCullough
 Estelle McCord
 Julie Brown
 Karen Atchinson
 Heather Milligan
 Louise Kincaid

Convener: Janice Mullan, *President*

ICT

Janice Mullan, *President*
 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 Tony McCabe, *Communications Officer*
 Pauline Hurst
 Aaron Davidson
 Andrew Fee
 Jill Johnston

Convener: Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*

PROPERTY

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 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Heather Arrell, *Financial Executive Officer*
 Karen Taylor, *Executive Officer*
 Alison Steen
 Steven Savage
 Grace McCullough

Convener: Janice Mullan, *President*

POLITICAL AND EQUALITY

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 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Naomi Billington
 Jill Ravey
 Andrew Fee
 Estelle McCord
 Pauline Hurst
 Janet Burke
 Joy Carrothers
 Colin Irwin
 Llenore Coles

Convener: Pauline Hurst

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 Jacquie White, Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 Stephen McCord, *Deputy General Secretary*
 Tony McCabe, *Communications Officer*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*

Convener: Janice Mullan, *President*

APPOINTMENTS

Janice Mullan, *President*
 Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
 Lynelle Fenton, *Past President*
 Jacquie White, *General Secretary*
 David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*
 Audrey Dempsey
 Jaki Gargan
 Steven Savage
 Lynn Robinson
 Grace McCullough

Convener: Janice Mullan, *President*



HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS AND TRUSTEES

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS

John Carr
Lexie Scott
Arlene Allen
Lewis Love
Alistair Orr
Audrey Stewart
Hope Kerr

UNION BUILDING TRUSTEES

Heather Beattie
Sally McKee
Alistair Orr
Lewis Love
Mevin McClean

PENSION TRUSTEES

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

UNION FUND TRUSTEES

Janice Mullan, *President*
Jon Bleakney, *Vice-President*
Lynelle Fenton, *Ex-President*
David Thompson, *Honorary Treasurer*

OTHER MATTERS CONSIDERED BY CEC

The CEC considered a wide range of issues other than those covered elsewhere in this report. The following gives an indication of the type of matters discussed:

- The Children's Law Centre Annual Lecture at the High Court (given by Judge Síofra O'Leary, the first female President of the European Court of Human Rights)
- Agri Aware
- White Ribbon
- UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry – Module 8
- Anti-Racist Workplaces and Trade Unions Project Conference
- The Great Refugee Week Picnic and the Belfast City of Sanctuary
- NSPCC Talk Relationships Programme
- Raising Attainment & Self-Esteem; PERMAV RBAI
- History of Integrated Education at The Linen Hall Library
- From Promise to Practice: Realising the Vision of the Children's Services Co-Operations Act -Hosted by The Children's Law Centre
- Rewilding Education - Rethinking the Place of Schools, Now and in the Future by Prof Hilary Cremin
- Deliberative Event on the merits/demerits of academic selection, the grammar/non-grammar system in NI and alternative education systems and their effects on pupils
- Primary School Teachers and SENCOS Understanding of Dyscalculia and Specific Learning Difficulties in Mathematics in a Northern Ireland Context
- The Belfast Football Association



2025 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions passed at Annual Conference last year have been at the centre of the UTU work agenda with the following progress having been made.

WORKLOAD

Resolutions: 10, 12, 20, 28, 29, 31

Primary planning and observation in nursery and special settings form Action 26 on the Heads of Agreement which are ready for delivery in the coming weeks at time of writing. The primary planning has proved more straightforward in delivery but commitments have been made by management side to further interrogate the workload in nursery and special which can be adjusted in this area. Engagement has begun with practitioners and the support of ETI has been sought and received to determine a way forward.

The post-primary issues around tracking and assessment have been a key component of discussions with changes around limits on tracking and flexibility of time also due to be delivered.

The requirement for a workload impact assessment for new initiatives in Action 1 should address the pace of change and it is the Minister's plan to have resources and training with regard to TransformED developed and delivered by practitioners. The issue of effective and timely engagement with the teaching unions in relation to changes and reviews is raised on a regular basis.

Whilst the 2020 Workforce Reviews still have many areas to be covered, many elements deliverable in the short-term have been incorporated into the Heads of Agreement and the recommendations from the Independent Panel which the Minister has committed to bringing forward. Work is constructive.

The status of extra-curricular activities has featured in this work.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Resolutions :2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 19

Special Educational Needs and the myriad of issues arising from this for schools has formed a significant part of the work this year with all issues being raised but little marked change being experienced in schools.

UTU has engaged with the Education Committee, the Department of Education and Heads of Service, with Rebekka Gilpin, UTU Official, further representing the needs of both schools and the Support Services on a regular basis in meetings with the CYPS.

Many of the changes sought are under consideration and to some degree incorporated into the SEN Transformation Programme but the significant lack of funding is clearly impacting on level of service and timely support. Appropriate de-escalation training for teachers in Special Provision is reported as being planned but we await rollout. Further, the lack of Educational Psychology support appears to have been addressed by changing the system, the success of which remains to be seen. The inclusion and recognition of children with SEN in school numbers is under review but we still require consideration and recognition of the additional demands associated with this.

Clarification around the status of teachers carrying out medical procedures has been sought and discussed but has not yet been confirmed in writing.

We have grave concerns about the apparent breakdown in communication and understanding between those in the DE who make the policy and those in EA who are asked to implement it with insufficient funds. A clear example of this is the population of the Local Impact Teams. We have sought a meeting with appropriate personnel to try to address this. Further, we will be engaging with the Education Committee as part of their enquiry.

Some of the resolutions listed above had teacher safety as part of their stated issues and progress on that area is reported below.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AT WORK

Resolutions: 9, 13, 30 and SEN

Work has been taking place over a number of months regarding Preventing Violence at Work. A number of policies have been developed to provide frameworks for schools to address social media abuse and incidents involving children and other adults.

As the policies were developed by EA there has been some delay in launching whilst we seek ways of ensuring that the protections will apply to teachers and school leaders in all schools.

We are also working on delivering an appropriate recording process which will again apply in all schools.

The 'lockdown' procedure which schools have been tasked to develop in line with ? Law will provide a response to a knife incident but there is much more to be done here.

GOVERNANCE

Resolutions: 16, 17, 18, 27

Many school leaders and teachers are facing growing issues with Governors and this has been raised in many meetings this year.

Training across many areas has been provided but is not yet mandatory and certainly does not ensure that Boards of Governors have been equipped to ensure that the expertise to address the myriad of issues, both those which arise with school staff and those which ensure equality of treatment, is in place. In fact, it is the case that we have growing numbers of unacceptable incidents which originate with Governors themselves.

One of the Heads of Agreement has led EA to run HR sessions for school leaders in relation to actioning procedures but this should not negate Governors of their responsibilities.

EA are taking under consideration the request for Governors to have a dedicated contact email address and work for this is underway.

Further, robust discussion of an appropriate complaints procedure has been taking place at TNC.

2025 CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Resolutions: 8, 11

Bursaries have been introduced to address the shortage of teachers in some subject areas and the reported response has been positive.

The Minister has established an earmarked fund for TPL of which schools can avail and has provided further time and materials for training related to TransformED.

EA and ETI have further established programmes for various career stages which have been well-attended.

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER COMPETENCIES

Resolutions: 25, 26

The concerns around the areas of omission and relevant skills in ITE have formed part of the discussion in the development of the new proposed GTCNI body and have been raised with the employers and ETI. Some change has been reported in ITE courses which is positive. Meetings are also scheduled to consider the fact that Induction and EPD are not mandatory thereby undermining robust structures to ensure that early career teachers can access the training and support they need. Work in this area is on-going.

OTHER ISSUES

Resolutions: 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24

Investment in equality of opportunity for all children and young people remains woefully inadequate; the Minister has committed to focusing what funding is available on the classroom and to tackling educational disadvantage but it remains to be seen how this can be delivered.

The schools' estate has now moved to unacceptable levels of poor maintenance and meetings have been sought to determine how priorities are defined here.

The Curriculum Review will be implemented in the next three years and we will have a sense of the direction of travel at the beginning of the next academic year.

Concerns around the inconsistency between the messaging from the ETI and those who offer advice around the process have been strongly voiced and progress is being made.

Communication between the employers generally has been a common feature of engagement.

There has been little tangible progress at system level in relation to grief education, bereavement support or tackling violence against women.

RULES AND CONSTITUTION

Private Session resolutions

The Rules and Constitution has been amended in line with agreed resolutions.



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.

Our challenges in the teaching profession continue with members facing constant pressures due to budgetary issues, an under-resourced SEN framework, lack of maintenance of school buildings and a constant shifting of responsibility to schools for areas which should be addressed by other departments and budgets. This is the background against which we are asking you to keep faith with regard to delivery in terms of workload and we fully appreciate that the wait has been long and the promises draining. We do believe that we are on the cusp of delivering change into schools and we appreciate that you have maintained the trust that we are doing all we can to move the situation forward and that change will come.

We also wish to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to those colleagues in our sister teaching unions who continue to stand 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.

Our President, Janice Mullan, joined us earlier than expected in the office and the General Secretary would like to record her thanks to both Janice and the Immediate Past-President, Lynelle Fenton, for going above and beyond for members and extending their tenure in order to ensure members were fully supported. 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 changes and crises which have defined the NI education system over the past year. 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, General Secretary 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.

Huge thanks and appreciation also go to our front-facing office staff, Lindsay, Meriel and Denise, who are often the first point of call for members, answering queries and ensuring that you receive a prompt and timely response from Officials when you need it. We often receive very positive feedback from members who call and I am sure many members would join me in thanking them for their approach and commitment on your behalf.

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.

There are a number of 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 delivering the agreed actions on workload 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.



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CONFERENCE HANDBOOK