

## **Sector Profile**

- Amicus has approximately 15,000 members employed by local authorities in the UK with over 1200 new recruits since December 2002.
- As the largest craft union Amicus members work alongside UCATT, GMB and TGWU members.
- Amicus represents members who are predominantly plumbers, electricians, gas fitters and other building trades who work within local authority building maintenance Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) on the repair and maintenance of council housing stock, schools and civic buildings although we also have members in street lighting and vehicle maintenance DLOs.
- Amicus members are employed under the Red Book JNC Agreement, which is a separate agreement to the JNC Green Book and applies only to the craft trades.

## **Current Issues and Activities**

- Amicus has worked with the TUC and the Government to introduce a Best Value Code of Practice to tackle the two tier workforce issues. In February 2003 the Government delivered on a Best Value Code of Practice to ensure the fair and equal treatment of all staff delivering services. All new service contracts must incorporate the Code when staff are transferred and the principles of TUPE must be applied in each case.
- Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS.) This is an area of key concern as the Government is undertaking a wide range review of the LGPS. Among its proposals is; the phasing out of the '85 year rule,' for existing members, increasing the earliest age at which LGPS benefits may be paid, other than on the grounds of ill health, from 50-55 and a higher employee contribution rate for new scheme members. We are contributing to the on-going consultation process.
- Pay. On 24 March this year, trade union side of the JNC for local authority craft and associated employees, submitted a pay and condition claim for an annual increase of 7% in basic pay for 2004/5. The claim also included a one off low pay supplement of £400 for labourers; substantial increases in apprentice rates and an increase in apprentice numbers. In May the unions rejected the employers pay offer of 7% over 3 years. A revised offer amounting to almost 9% over 3 years was also rejected. Negotiations continue.
- Single Status. This is an important issue for members in local authorities as councils are coming under increasing pressure from equal pay claims. While Amicus supports equal pay for jobs of equal value we have real concerns that the comparators being used are craft workers employed under bonus schemes. We must ensure that comparators used in equal pay audits are used fairly and that the skills of our members are fully understood and valued.
- Housing. Amicus has affiliated to the Defend Council Housing, a campaigning group that lobbies the Government for direct investment into local authority housing. The campaign had a major success at the Labour Party Conference when an amendment, calling for a level playing field, was passed. Amicus is involved in local campaigns in areas that are undergoing the Options Appraisal process and is lobbying for local councils to retain control of their stock.
- Skills Shortage. This is a real problem in the local authority sector. Amicus welcomes the JNC decision to establish a working group to look at the issue of apprenticeships.