

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. In December 2004 members agreed via ballot to accept the pay offer. The revised offer amounts to some significant improvements to the previous package first offered to craft workers in May last year. Although improvements were not achieved on the pay increases reached (2.75 per cent for 2004, 2.95 per cent for 2005 and 2.95 per cent or the level of RPI, whichever is higher for 2006,) extra cash was secured for workers through a 133 per cent increase over two years in the tool allowance. This amounts to approximately an additional 1.5 per cent to the pay deal. Most importantly the unions won an undertaking from the employers to support the continuation of the craft workers 'Red Book' agreement to ensure that craft workers are treated separately from town hall staff and the promise of movement on the payment of salaries under the umbrella of the craft agreement. The deal also managed to secure a promise of a better deal for apprentices and an agreed protocol on the use by councils of agency labour.
- 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.