

## **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. Amicus responded to phase 1 of the consultation and are currently working with other relevant unions to draft a response to phase 2.
- 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 recently sponsored a report by The Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) entitled "Housing Options: the future for social housing in the UK: exploring the options," which argues that Arms Length Management Options should be given parity of access to private sector sources of capital with Registered Social Landlords. (RSLs.)
- 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.