

# UNISON COMMUNITY

Regional  
Newsletter  
Summer 2018

Hello, and welcome to the Summer 2018 edition of our Regional newsletter for UNISON members and activists in the Community Sector—members who work in housing associations, charities, some care homes and not-for profit organisations. We want to be able to share information with you on current issues, keep you up to date with the great work that UNISON is doing, and listen to your ideas and feedback for new organising issues and ways to support our members.

If you have any colleagues that haven't received it, please share this with them as we want it to grow! All UNISON members with an up to date email address will receive this automatically, and of course new members are always very welcome!

UNISON is the biggest public sector trade union in the UK, with over 1.3 million members. Our strength is in our organisation, and that comes from YOU – our members and activists. With the current government's continued attacks on the public sector under the guise of 'austerity', it is vital that we support each other and challenge these attacks; working together to achieve better pay and conditions and a fairer society.

In this issue we have articles on how to stay safe when using social media, the Violence at Work Charter, a report from Conference from our Northern Region Rep & Chair of the Service Group, Malcolm Gray, and a report from one of our members on why she is proud to be a member of UNISON.

Best wishes,  
Helen Metcalf, Regional Organiser and Community Lead

## Meet the team...



**Helen  
Metcalf**



**Joe Kirwin**

## NEWSFLASH:

**UNISON will be supporting the Durham Miners' Gala again this year and UNISON Northern Region will be in attendance, with many of our Branches taking part. Come and join us! The Gala takes place on 14th July 2018 and is a great day out.**

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# UNISON Welfare - there for you



If you are struggling with school uniform costs this summer, then help is at hand.

There for You have a limited fund to help UNISON members on low income with school uniform costs with a one off payment of up to £120.

In 2017, 41 applications and £2,400 was given in school uniform grants, helping 60 children in the Northern Region.

To apply, download the application form from [unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://unison.org.uk/thereforyou) or contact Unison Direct on 0800 0 857 857 for an application form.

Closing date for applications is Friday 20th July 2018.

# UNISON Welfare - there for you

***If you are a member and you are experiencing financial difficulties, whatever the circumstances, There for You can offer you support. You may have financial problems for reasons including:***

- Relationship breakdown;
- Loss of income;
- Suffering from a long illness;
- Needing to buy equipment because of a disability
- Caring for someone with special needs or an illness

There is no guarantee that we can offer you financial help, but thousands of members and their families do benefit from our support every year.

For example, in 2012, There for You gave more than 4,000 grants to members totalling nearly £750,000.

For more information contact 020 7121 5620, email [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk) or contact your local branch.

## **General advice**

There for You provides support in coping with personal problems at home. We provide a confidential service for members over the phone or in person if you are experiencing personal difficulties such as:

- Being off work due to long-term illness;
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Living on the breadline and needing to pay for a major bill or vital item;
- Recovering from surgery;
- Debt advice

## **UNISON Debtline**

There for you provides a free, impartial and confidential debt advice service over the phone in partnership with Payplan, experts in helping people in financial difficulty. Debtline will help you find the best solution to suit your circumstances. The service is completely **free** to UNISON members.

We also have an online version of our debt advice service called clinic which provides advice and debt information and outlines key problems. The site also provides tools to help you set up a recovery plan.

**there  
for you**  
supporting UNISON members  
when life gets tough

**Join UNISON [joinunison.org](http://joinunison.org)**

## Report from Community Conference 2018, Southport. Attended by Malcolm Gray, Northern Region Rep & Chair of the Service Group



The weather threatened to minimise attendance and there was a possibility that the Conference would not have gone ahead. But, despite the weather's best efforts, members made the journey, braved the elements and showed dedication to the cause. Many delegates had stories about getting through the elements which made us all proud that we attended. Well done everyone who came, including our delegates from the Northern Region.

The Service Group Executive (SGE) met on Friday at 10am to discuss the detail of conference and to confirm which of the SGE would be speaking on motions or responding to urgent motions. All the detail was agreed. At conference we had a total of 17 motions to consider.

The motions tabled covered issues in social care, housing, violence at work, pay, wellbeing and health, training and development and strengthening Black Community links and LGBT Equality. I guess from my point of view we could argue that the sector is heading in the right direction and making the right decisions but debate is always a good way of ensuring that the motions are fully considered and fully encompassing all our values. The motions were strong, competent and all had strong support from delegates.

I was asked to speak about the year we had been through, the challenges we faced, the results we had achieved and the challenges we still face. The speech I gave was, even for me who is a confident person, nerve racking. I have a full appreciation of those members who speak at conference, because when the amber light shows that your time is coming to an end you can easily lose your place. I guess it gave me a respect for those who speak at Conference. Well done those who have and for those who have not... give it a go if you get the chance to attend in the future.

Many activists that attended were first time delegates and they were unsure what faced them, how to act and of course what to say. The conference opened their eyes to what we as union activists do, discuss and the reasons we act. The workshops arranged for new delegates were well attended and allowed those feeling nervous or unsure an opportunity to listen, consider and learn. The workshops helped to settle the nerves of many.

When conference started and the debate commenced there was a number that not only discussed a topic but informed conference of where we were nationally in terms of data. When we discussed Social Care, for example, the North West Region had lodged 150+ National Minimum Wage claims against 13 employers which is an amazing effort and replicated throughout the country.

Conference welcomed Carol Iddon; Managing Director Children's Services, Action for Children. Carol delivered a speech about her work and current post with Action for Children. Carol has strong links with UNISON and has history as an activist. Her story was great to hear and the feedback from conference highlighted how her presentation was well received. We were also joined by Christina McAnea, Assistant General Secretary of UNISON. Christina delivered a powerful message of solidarity and highlighting UNISON's determination to tackle injustice and win the battles faced by our members. It was brilliant to see Christina make the journey to be with us at Conference. The workshops at Conference; The Violence at Work Charter, Lay Democracy in UNISON, how it works, were all well attended and all received excellent feedback. As for Conference...well it ran smoothly, all motions agreed, hotel nice, weather appalling and we now move forward as a Sector with more direction.

# Stay safe on social media

**In the workplace, a good rule of thumb is 'don't post anything you wouldn't be happy for your boss to see' – this applies to all employees including those on placements and universities.**

UNISON has represented a significant number of employees and students over social media posting in the last year – don't be caught out follow these golden rules.

We all like to use social media to update our friends on what we've been doing. But if you don't use it responsibly, you can find yourself in hot water! Always remember everyone can see these pages and even if you change your settings to private there's no guarantee that a throw away comment made in jest won't come back to haunt you. It's always better to be safe than sorry, so be extra careful with what you post – including images.

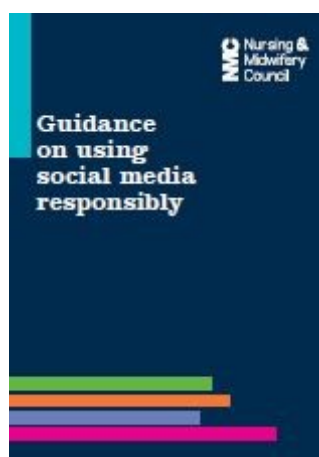
Nowadays most employers and universities (if you are on placement) have social media policies in place to remind students and members of staff that they should be responsible and respectful of one another when using these sites. In fact, some employers even state that the content that you post on social media sites can be 'relevant to your employment'. Prospective employers may search on social media including LinkedIn to check information. No matter how stressful your shift or placement is, it's never a good idea to post your frustrations on Facebook or Twitter. It's more productive, and far safer, for you to pick up the phone and talk through your issues with a colleague, friend or family member. So be safe when using social media! Only go on Facebook or Twitter during your breaks, get familiar with your social media policies (they can differ from workplace to workplace) and think twice before pressing enter because even though you can hit the delete button, it might just be too late.

## A few tips to remember:

1. **Do** use social media its a great communication tool
2. **Don't** talk about patients or put information about them on sites
3. **Don't** criticise your employer, university or placement on social media
4. **Don't** upload images from clinical placements onto facebook
5. **Don't** upload photos of you doing funny or naughty things in your uniform

The NMC have produced a booklet to cover nurses and midwives, which is underpinned by the code, covers the need to use social media and networking sites responsibly.

It is not intended to cover every social media situation that a nurse or midwife may face, however it sets out broad principles to enable them to think through issues and act professionally, ensuring public protection at all times.



<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/social-media-guidance/>



## Violence at Work Charter

Eighteen organisations have now signed up to UNISON's campaign to eradicate violence and aggression against staff in the voluntary sector after the union pledged to tackle the problem in the sector.

Launched in March 2017, the campaign was created after a survey of members in the Community Service Group had revealed that 48% of workers in the group had experienced a violent or aggressive incident at work in the preceding two years.

That figure has been confirmed by subsequent surveys.

Respondents to the survey reported such incidents as

- "Verbal abuse and threat of being hit with a chair when my back was turned"
- "Service user punched me in the face"
- "Client threatened to slit my throat"
- "A knife was pulled on me by a service user"
- "I was punched two times and kicked two times"
- "I was hit by a service user when pregnant and have been scratched, punched and kicked by service users numerous times".

UNISON wants the campaign to help end violence at work by first establishing that violence is unacceptable and not 'just part of the job'.

National Officer Gavin Edwards said: "The Charter sets a basic level of risk management and support for staff in the CVS Sector, and is a key part of our campaign to stop violence being seen as 'part of the job'. Charities and Housing Associations need to take proactive steps to protect their staff, and signing the Charter shows they are prepared to do this".

All those who sign the campaign receive a certificate.

If you wish to view the charter visit [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)



## Update your details

So that we can keep you up to date with UNISON campaigns and information, it is vital that we hold the most up to date and recent information for you.

If you have recently moved house, changed Mobile number, email address, or have moved to another workplace or employer, please contact us to let us know.

Contact either your local branch, or contact UNISON Direct on:

**0800 0 857 857**

## Want to do something more?

Help your colleagues and other UNISON members by becoming a workplace rep or contact. Being a UNISON workplace rep gives you the opportunity to:

- **make a positive difference to peoples lives**
- **Learn new skills and meet new people**
- **Help create a fairer society**

**GET INVOLVED IN UNISON**

**Find out more at [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)**

## It's time to pay up for care

Pay in care – and the community and voluntary sector – has featured in the news a lot over the past year, with accusations over travel time, sleeping-in pay and the minimum wage.

Not surprisingly, it was also an issue that loomed large on the agenda at UNISON's community service group conference in Southport recently. Delegates called for work across the union, including liaising with UNISON's local government and health structures, to campaign for proper funding for social care, whether directly provided or commissioned from community and voluntary organisation, so that staff can be properly paid and vulnerable people properly cared for.

Conference also called for sector-wide collective bargaining, decent housing for housing association and voluntary sector staff, an end to the pay cap and for the union-wide Pay Up Now! campaign to specifically include, and appeal to, workers across the community, voluntary and housing sectors.

In particular the debate on the hot topic of proper pay for workers' required to sleep-in when providing care for the vulnerable got members up to the rostrum.

Owen Adams from Barnsley told conference he'd been doing sleep-ins for 15 years, and being paid just £3.80 an hour for 15 years.

But, he asked conference, "when you go on holiday, do you pay less for the hours you're asleep."

A recent court said employers paying less than the minimum wage rates for sleep-ins were breaking the law.

But charities providing care services are resisting having to pay the bills for unlawful underpayment, saying it will drive them under, and the government is lending a sympathetic ear, giving them longer deadlines to settle.

Winning the payments care workers are owed "is going to be a long and difficult campaign," Kevin Jackson said for the service group executive. But "it is a fight we must win; it is a fight we will win." At the same time, he said, "we need to ensure that a future Labour government funds councils so our charities don't go out of business."

## Childcare Vouchers

The government announced in March that the vouchers scheme used by parents to fund childcare through their pre-taxed salary would not close to new entrants, as expected in April, but would live on for another six months.

An alternative scheme that offers tax-free childcare is already operational and will eventually replace the vouchers entirely. It means anyone earning between £120 a week and £100,000 a year will receive top-up contributions for every child under 12.

## Legal Services

You may have seen media stories concerning mesh surgery sometimes known as tape implants, vaginal mesh, TVT, rectopexy and Stapled Transanal Rectal Resection (STARR). There are reports that several women (and some men) have given little or no information about the potential dangers of the implant and that unnecessary mesh implant procedures are being carried out. As a result, thousands of patients are suffering from painful symptoms and many are calling for mesh procedures to be banned.

If you, or a member of your family, think you might have been affected, contact UNISON's legal service provided by Thompsons Solicitors for free, confidential legal advice. Our medical negligence experts are already supporting a number of clients and can help you too. For more information visit: <https://www.thompsonstradeunion.law/services/medical-negligence/vaginal-and-rectal-mesh-implant->



## UNISON in the Voluntary Sector And how you can get more involved!

Some workers in the voluntary sector think that membership of a Trade Union is irrelevant in workplaces that are small, unique in character and lack appropriate opportunities for staff to organise collectively.

I would suggest they think again about what union membership brings. It provides the chance to be part of a movement which will always stand up for fairness not just at work, but in our wider community and global society. I am proud to be a UNISON member because I don't just count the advantages of membership – although they are numerous; - car insurance, health and dental plans, financial advice and legal protection, I also have the chance to give something back by encouraging others, passing on information and attending meetings.

I work for Justice First; a charity in the Tees Valley which cares for people who have come to the UK to seek protection because they have suffered persecution in some of the most unstable, dangerous countries in the world. We hear every day in the media about cruel regimes where there are arbitrary arrests, suicide attacks and bombings. Our clients are forced to flee their homes, jobs and families and seek sanctuary in an unfamiliar country. Not all are made welcome – some have faced racism and public hostility.

I have heard many stories of torture and sexual abuse and we meet many people who have been traumatised by their experiences. We are able to provide a safe place where we can advise and assist in helping people to exercise their right to claim asylum.

The work is at times both heart breaking and rewarding because there is a tremendous sense of achievement in walking beside a person as they make their journey from fear and vulnerability to safety and dignity.

My organisation is overseen by a board of trustees whose compassion for the client group we serve is extraordinary and their commitment exemplary, so it goes without saying that they are also good employers. However, I realise that not everyone in the voluntary sector feels valued and it is sometimes difficult in workplaces where there are only one or two staff, to have the confidence to seek help when it is needed.

I have been touched by the kindness of other UNISON members who bring gifts for the children of our families – letting them know that others care, particularly at Christmas, Easter etc.

I am lucky in being able to do a job I love, but also to be part of the supportive family that is UNISON.

***Kath Sainsbury, Caseworker, Justice First***

**If you would like to contribute to the next Community and Voluntary Newsletter, please email Helen Metcalf at [h.metcalf@unison.co.uk](mailto:h.metcalf@unison.co.uk)**



**I'm proud  
to be in a  
TRADE  
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**Find out more at [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)**

## A bit more about us... And how you can get more involved!

This is *your* newsletter, and we'd like *your* contributions for the next one. If you'd like a feature, or to contribute, please email [h.metcalf@unison.co.uk](mailto:h.metcalf@unison.co.uk)

**UNISON is the largest union in the community and voluntary sector, with more than 60,000 members.**

The community service group makes sure that UNISON provides a strong focus and a prominent voice for all of our members working in this field.

The community service group welcomes workers from organisations including charities, housing associations and community and voluntary organisations.

Service groups give UNISON the knowledge of issues specific to the sector and in turn, service group members have access to union benefits that are tailored to their job.

So if you experience problems at work, your UNISON representative (s) will be able to help, in part because they know the issues affecting your sector from first-hand experience.

When it comes to continuing professional development, service groups allow us to better tailor our courses to workers in specific sectors so UNISON members can continue improving their skills.

Our community service group is essential to advancing employment issues. For example

we focus on defending pay, sickness absence, health and safety and funding issues, which are all common problems in this sector. Members of the community service group also get involved in campaigns against public service cuts and defending jobs and services when they come under threat.

Members are elected to UNISON's community service group executive, which helps decide on policies and activities.

Decisions on policies and priorities are made at the Community Service Group's annual Conference.

Here in the Northern Region we have recently had one of our activists elected as the Chair of the National Service Group. Malcolm Gray works for Livin based at Spennymoor, and will include a report from his first meetings in our next Regional Newsletter, due out in December.

Malcolm, together with our Regional Service Group Chair Joe Kirwin, and Regional Lead Helen Metcalf, can all be contacted for further information.

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Find out more at [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)



We use this address to send you information core to your membership such as your membership pack, UNISON election information and any information relating to ballots if relevant

We use this to contact you about trade union activities and services

This information helps us see if you were previously a member

This information helps us find the best UNISON branch to support and represent your needs

Your subscription rate is determined by how much you earn

## 1 Tell us about you

Title  First name

Last name  Postcode

Home address

Email

Phone number (indicate home, work or mobile)

Email  Text  Phone

By ticking these boxes, you are giving your consent for UNISON to contact you by these means about how we campaign on your behalf.

National Insurance number

Date of birth

## 2 Tell us about your job

Employer's name

Your job title or occupation

Workplace name and address

Postcode

## 3 What you will pay each month

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions

Annual pay	Core subscription	£14,001 – £17,000	£9.70
£0,000 – £2,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £1.30	<input type="checkbox"/> £17,001 – £20,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £11.50
£2,001 – £5,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £3.50	<input type="checkbox"/> £20,001 – £25,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £14.00
£5,001 – £8,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £5.30	<input type="checkbox"/> £25,001 – £30,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £17.25
£8,001 – £11,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £6.60	<input type="checkbox"/> £30,001 – £35,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £20.30
£11,001 – £14,000	<input type="checkbox"/> £7.85	<input type="checkbox"/> £35,000 – and over	<input type="checkbox"/> £22.50

This information tells us whether you wish to contribute an additional 5% toward UNISON's campaign fund

## 4 Campaign fund contribution

UNISON stands up for its members and speaks out publicly on the issues that affect them. To continue this work we ask for a voluntary 5% campaign contribution when you join. Please tick your preference below:

Campaign Fund  
The campaign fund promotes better public services, enables the union to talk with politicians of any party about the work our members do and supports the union's equalities work, and in Parliament.

UNISON Labour Link  
Labour Link campaigns for UNISON policy on the NHS, your employment rights and for quality public services within the Labour Party locally and in Parliament.

No thank you  
I do not wish to contribute to campaigning at the moment. Those who choose not to opt in will not be disadvantaged in any way as compared with members who do opt in.

If you selected 'No thank you' – by ticking this box you are giving consent for UNISON to contact you in future about our campaign funds. We will do this using the contact details you provided on this form.

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To the manager bank / building society

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Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Account number

Branch sort code

Service user no.

Reference number

Please pay UNISON Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with UNISON and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature

Date