

UNISON Welfare

network

UNISON Welfare's newsletter for branch welfare officers and all volunteers

An important date for UNISON Welfare

This year UNISON Welfare celebrates its centenary. In the coming editions of this newsletter we will be telling you more however please do be aware of the following opportunities to support UNISON Welfare and raise funds to help our friends and colleagues who may be in need of our support in these difficult times.

**Remember UNISON Welfare is *your* charity –
'there to help make a difference in member's lives'**

Our logo and how to use it

Our centenary logo can be supplied to you in a vector format by email and is available in colour or black and white. The size you print this logo will depend on the type and size of promotional materials you are producing. We do not stipulate a minimum or maximum size you must use.

The most important thing is that the logo is only used to promote the centenary and, when linked to fundraising activities must only be for UNISON Welfare. Centenary events must not be used to raise money for any regional or branch welfare fund. In all circumstances please also quote UNISON Welfare charity registration 1023552. This logo can be used with immediate effect through to the end of 2010. If you have any queries, please email j.grant@unison.co.uk.

UNISON Welfare



welcome

I'm delighted to bring you our latest edition of Network which is part of our commitment to invest in volunteers and ensure you have access to the support and information you need to undertake your role.

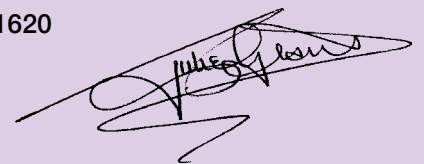
We aim to bring you quarterly news covering all aspects of our work of particular relevance to branch welfare officers and all our volunteers; services, our partnerships benefits information, advising and supporting members, national and local sources of help, case stories and publicity.

This latest edition puts the spotlight on our centenary and I hope you may be able to support any local fundraising initiatives or indeed get your branch to sign up to the lottery.

In particular we would like to hear from you. Your success stories, local news, tips and activities you have been involved in. Please get in touch.

E.mail: welfare@unison.co.uk

Tel: 020 7551 1620



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Centenary fundraising events

We're also pleased to report that 3 national fundraising 'challenge' events that have been organised in 2010 are all now full. However, we're delighted to also report that a number of regional welfare committees are also organising their own local fundraisers.

- **Scotland:** Sponsored Walk and Family Fun Day being organised by the Scottish Welfare Committee on 30 May 2010 in Pittencrieff Park in Dunfermline. If you would like to take part, offer assistance on the day or make a donation, please contact Diane Anderson on 0141 342 2842 or at d.anderson@unison.co.uk
- **East Midlands:** Centenary Family Fun Walk is being organised on 23 May at Staunton Harold, Leicestershire. Members and families are invited with freebies available on the day. please contact Lesley Bailey on 0115 8475474 or at l.bailey@unison.co.uk

- **South West:** The South West Regional Welfare Committee is organising special raffles at regional council during 2010 with all proceeds coming to UNISON Welfare.

- **South East:** The south east region has set itself an ambitious target to raise £5,000 for UNISON Welfare to mark the centenary. The regional secretary has agreed to cycle from Southampton to Strood in May if the target is achieved.

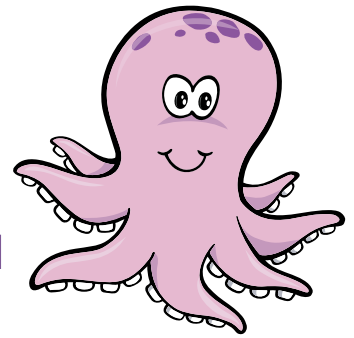


checklist

- ✓ Branches are asked to support regional fundraising events by making donations and encouraging members to take part wherever possible.
- ✓ Branches are also encouraged to carry out some local fundraising in this our centenary year by holding a raffle, quiz night, tombola etc. If you want ideas, please contact p.barker@unison.co.uk.
- ✓ Order copies of our latest newsletter to put on workplace noticeboards to draw attention to the work of UNISON Welfare and the history of the charity.

Lottery

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Individual UNISON members are limited to a maximum of 10 numbers each month but branches can sign up for up to 20 numbers. We would ask all UNISON Branches to consider this as a way of making a regular donation to support UNISON Welfare. If Branch Executive Committees would like more information please email p.barker@unison.co.uk or j.grant@unison.co.uk

checklist

- ✓ Branches and regions are asked to promote the lottery through their own newsletters. An electronic version of the Octopus logo and advert is available through p.barker@unison.co.uk.

Criteria for financial assistance: UPDATE

An updated version of the criteria for financial assistance is now available to download from the documents folder on the welfare pages on the UNISON website www.unison.org.uk/welfare. Thanks to everyone who gave their views on the criteria through the on-line survey in 2009. This was a much wider consultation than has previously been conducted and over 300 members took part from Regional Welfare Committee members, branch welfare officers and beneficiaries.

- **Download latest version of criteria**



Donations

Over the last few months we've seen a drop off in donations to UNISON Welfare and want to take this opportunity to ask branches to consider making a donation in this our centenary year.

Branch Welfare Officer Training in 2010

In February we saw the first of the Branch Welfare Officer training courses being run in London and 16 Welfare Officers from London, South East, Yorkshire & Humberside, North West and East Midlands regions took part. This was followed by Parts 2 & 3 in March. The second of the courses for Branch Welfare Officers in the Northern Ireland, South West, Cymru/Wales and West Midlands regions kicked off in the middle of March and the last course will be held in Manchester on 8 July

followed by 2 days on 20-21 July. This course is primarily for Welfare Officers in the Northern, North West, Scotland and Yorkshire & Humberside regions.

Branch Welfare Officer training is provided over a 3 days. The course is run in two blocks, a one-day introduction with a two day follow-on session a couple of weeks later. Completion of the course will equip officers with the skills and training that is essential for their role.

I did not know what to expect but the course has helped me set boundaries around the role.

STOP PRESS: The South East region is hoping to organise a further training session towards the end of the year which will also be open to any welfare officer who was unable to secure a place on one of the other courses. Further details will be circulated once plans are finalised.



New initiatives – Winter Fuel Grants

In view of the recent spell of exceptionally cold weather and given the significant increases in energy costs, UNISON Welfare has set up a limited fund to provide one-off payments of £50 towards winter fuel costs to assist our most vulnerable members.

The charity recognises that members in receipt of specific benefits will have received Cold Weather

Payments from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on top of their usual benefit payments.

The Winter Fuel Grants fund is therefore open to members who are retired or suffering from long-term health conditions and who have not been able to benefit from the Cold Weather Payments. Members can apply direct to UNISON Welfare using the relevant application form.

checklist

- Branches and regional groups are asked to promote this initiative via their own networks to ensure that those most in need of help are able to access this vital benefit.
- Note the closing date for applications is **30 April 2010**

For further information and a copy of the form, please go to www.unison/welfare.org.uk

How are we doing?

All of us at UNISON Welfare are committed to providing a quality service. This year, as part of our effort of making sure the services we provide meet members' needs, we have been looking at new ways of working to achieve this goal. In this section we take a look at some of the work going on behind the scenes intended to improve service delivery.

• **Time well spent:** Towards the end of last year we 'went live' with a new case management system. The introduction of new software has been long overdue however we are confident that the new system will deliver efficiencies in a number of areas including cheque production and tracking and processing of applications. Key performance indicators (KPI's) built into the system will allow us to instantly access information about case progression and provide an ease of reporting which up to now has been both difficult and time-consuming.

• **New application form:** This year, we will be updating the application form for financial assistance. If you run out of application forms please wherever possible download the form from our website as and when they are needed rather than ordering supplies. As well as ensuring we don't spend unnecessarily on printing costs, this is an environmental issue. In 2008, we exhausted our printed supply of 20,000 forms so somewhere out in the regions there are 17,000+ forms collecting dust in branches offices.

meet the team

Welcome to the first in our series of 'Spotlight' items where we introduce you to different members of the Team of staff at UNISON Welfare. Over future editions you can find out more about the team behind UNISON Welfare, our trustees and regional welfare committees.

This edition's spotlight is on **Janice Lavers, Caseworker.**



I started work for Nalgo Welfare in the Autumn of 1976, previously I had worked for a company selling marine and outboard engines and spares, so coming into a Trade Union was a very different experience.

I started at the bottom as it were, one of 2 clerks dealing with the post, making up case files sending out quarterly report, preparing cheque lists etc, all hand written of course, a complete change from now where everything is done on computer.

I progressed within 12–18 months to being the officer in charge of booking all the convalescent applications, in those days we had 2 convalescent homes one in Bournemouth and one in Lytham St. Annes in Blackpool. I also dealt with the Residents in a sponsored Residential home dealing with the accounts and also sending them a little goody from the Fund each month.

The expertise I carry from this post is that since then, I have been able to decipher the most appalling hand writing, having read hundreds of medical certificates completed by GP's. recognise and understand different ailments and diseases which all led to me being 'nominated' First Aider.

Then in 1981 a Caseworkers post became vacant and I applied and got the job. I always liked dealing with people, and with the case workers job I had even more contact, not only with the members but also the Welfare Committees. It's not good that so many people are in difficulties, but it is good that we are here and are able to offer not only financial assistance but advice as well, and in some cases a sympathetic ear is all that's needed...

Our members are suffering a variety of problems at present, loss of income due to severe ill health or accident at work, repossessions and bankruptcy are also on the increase.

There are no simple cases any more, most people who apply to Unison Welfare now have multiple and complex problems, so to be able to help them by advising about relevant benefits, seeking debt or legal advice, or referral to a specialist agency and also being able to offer some financial assistance whilst they are awaiting the outcome of benefit applications is invaluable.

On a more personal note I like music and the theatre. Gardening I do, but to me it's not therapeutic! I read a lot, and a good murder is my favourite!! Its not often that some one can say that their job makes a difference but I can say that mine does, and I am proud of that.

Janice Lavers is the contact for North West, West Midlands and East Midlands regions on casework matters. She also manages applications to the Ambulance Service Workers' Hardship Fund.

comments and contributions

We're pleased to receive comments about the content and style of this briefing. Contributions are also welcome – maybe you want you share an idea or report on a successful fundraising event, describe how you have helped a member recently or how UNISON Welfare has helped recruitment in the branch. Any contribution that is printed will receive a **£10 M&S voucher.**

- Regional Welfare Committees are invited to publicise local fundraising events or other initiatives in 'Network'.**

