



Welfare Newsletter



Winter 2018

By Watty Gaffney

Fundraising 2018-19

This coming year our committee is taking on the challenge of organising a nationwide (Scotland Region) raffle. A license has been obtained and the committee are keen to get moving on this exciting venture.

It is vitally important now more than ever before that we continue to support the UNISON Welfare Charity 'There for You' which helps our members on a daily basis.

The service provides financial assistance or much needed debt advice as well as the bucket and spade appeal which raises funds for short holidays, giving a much-needed break to families after facing difficult circumstances such as ill health or bereavement of a loved one.

The committee will shortly be contacting all Branches with regard to how they can help support our fundraiser by selling raffle tickets, donating prizes or by a cash donation to assist in the setup and running of the event.

Look out for flyers at UNISON Scotland events, and meetings, and also the UNISON Scotland website. This will hopefully be the first of many raffle events moving forward and we hope that Branches will support this new venture.

Welfare Seminar 2018

By Fiona Montgomery

Branch welfare officers enjoyed a successful seminar in Clydebank in November, kicked off by a rousing speech from UNISON President Gordon McKay.

As a Trustee of There for You, Gordon knows very well the amount of work branch welfare officers put in, helping members in crisis. He said this work is enormously appreciated and thanked everyone involved for contributing to the strong service provided to support members through the charity.



Gordon also attacked the Tory Government's assault on the most vulnerable people. He told members,

"We are witnessing the return of poverty and diseases of the 19th century. Welfare cuts of 17% since the Tories took office. Families are worse off under new welfare systems."

This was echoed by Scott Donohoe, chair of UNISON's Scottish Housing Issues & Welfare Group, who gave a detailed update on the rollout of Universal Credit.



Scott highlighted how the changes are cutting incomes, including for some of the most vulnerable, adding to already outrageous inequalities and in-work poverty. Scott said,

“The rich are getting richer while benefits are slashed yet again - a deliberate and cruel UK Government policy, with increased levels of suicide among those making claims.”

Branch welfare officers expressed immense anger at the situation, with several examples given of the ways in which members had been left with severely reduced, or in some cases no funds, for periods of time.

Julie Grant, head of welfare, introduced a range of new resources to support BWOs and stressed the importance of the UNISON Lottery in raising funds for There for You.

All branches are urged to contribute to the lottery as this regular income plays a key role in ensuring the charity can help as many members as possible.

Elizabeth Rankin, chair of the Welfare Committee, said,

“Committee members will be promoting the lottery in the coming months, along with other fundraising work including a raffle and possibly a charity walk. There is a supply of promotional materials to help raise awareness of There for You, including trolley coin keyrings, torches, pens and sticky notes.”

The Committee thanked Watty Gaffney, who is standing down, for his work and communications expertise. Scott’s presentation is available for downloading on the UNISON Scotland website.

Food Banks

As we have previously mentioned, There for You are closely linked to food banks, and our Officers can act as agents, to provide vouchers for those most in need.

To assist in providing for our members, we collected for the food banks at our seminar in Clydebank.

We do have access to vouchers for food banks and there is further information on the national website.

It is vital that where fundraising can be held, or collections made that we encourage branches to do likewise.



UNISON Lottery

Join the UNISON lottery for as little as £1 a month and you could win cash prizes of up to £1,000.

Each month winners are selected at random. Prize cheques are posted directly to winners, so there’s no need to worry about claiming.

When you join you will be sent your lottery numbers, which will automatically be entered into every draw. The more people that play, the bigger the prize fund becomes!

Join online now at: unison.charitylotteries.co.uk

People can face unexpected difficulties during their life. That’s why UNISON’s unique charity is there to support members and their families.

Whether it’s debt, emergency financial help, coping with ill health or losing a loved one – There for You help members through the tough times.

By joining the lottery, you can play a vital part in ensuring that There for You can continue this important work.



UNISON Winter Fuel Grant

Members living on a low income constantly struggle to make ends meet – and this can be particularly acute in the winter when the cost of heating homes rises as the outside temperature falls.

But it's not all bad news – help IS available. The union's welfare charity There for You has once more set up a limited fund to help members on low incomes towards the cost of their winter fuel bill through a one-off payment of £60.



The process is very similar to previous years and an amount of money has been ring-fenced to support this initiative. However, once it's gone it's gone!

So, don't miss out. Apply early and send your form and supporting paperwork in as soon as possible. All the information you need can be found on the UNISON website. Alternatively, contact UNISON Direct on 0800 0857 857 for a form to be sent to you.

Just one more thing: please don't keep details of this grant a secret. Help us to help even more members and let your work colleagues know that help is at hand. There will be many, like you, worrying about how they will cope this winter.

Completed applications need to be sent to There for You, (WFG) UNISON Centre, 130 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AY by Friday 15 February 2019 at the latest.

New Lanark Fun Day

Our yearly event at the New Lanark family fun day was a huge success.



Once again, our tombola run by Pat Rowland, raised a total of £574.

Many thanks to all those who attended and donated prizes to the tombola. Some prizes were unclaimed on the day and a decision was made to donate those items to local food banks.

Financial Support Form Guidance

As you will be aware, any members who wish to claim financial support are asked to complete an application form.

Whilst the 'There for You' application for financial assistance form contains many explanatory notes throughout as an aid to completion, new supplementary notes have been produced as a further aid to understanding the reasons why we ask for certain information.

As well as helping members to understand why we ask certain questions, the guide contains important information about how we use their personal details.

We therefore recommend that you take the opportunity to read through this guide and ensure that you provide a copy for all members, before making an application and ensure Data Protection compliance.

A copy of the form can be found on the national website, There for You section, under resources.

Stewards Ongoing Training

Many of our steward's encounter members who need our assistance on an almost daily basis.

Whilst you may have a welfare officer in your branch, we suggest that as a representative, you empower yourself by learning more about welfare and how we can help.

There are online training modules which can help you to do this and we advise that all stewards, whether they wish to be a welfare officer or not, complete the online training.

Not only will this give you a better understanding of how There for You can help, but it will allow you to support your members better and hopefully be able to recognise those members who need our help.

Croyde Bay Welfare Seminar

This year's theme was Vulnerability. Julie Grant, Head of UNISON opened the Seminar. The purpose of this first activity was to discuss the needs and offers of delegates in the room.



Delegates had some really useful ideas on what to do to promote 'There for You' including doing roadshows and setting up local food banks. Others wanted to know how to communicate better with members and signpost to specific services, such as counselling.

Margaret Thomas, The Assistant General Secretary, gave a speech on the State of the Union and this was followed by a session on vulnerability, very useful to our daily job as well as for our members.

Following this session, UNISON's Data Protection Officer gave a speech on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Day 2 started with a presentation by UNISON Debtline (Payplan) around Debt and Vulnerability. The presentation was opened by Jane Clack who as usual was incredibly entertaining. She was joined by Alastair Chisholm who continued the presentation explaining vulnerability in terms of Debt.



After a short Coffee Break Seminar moved on to "The Effects of Problem Gambling", the presentation was presented by The Head of Marketing and Communications at "GamCare" who support people with Gambling addictions.

This presentation pushed the boundaries of technology as it was presented remotely via Skype which was very clever and surprisingly reliable.

The Statistics around Problem Gambling is alarming with 460,000 people categorised as problem gamblers with a further 2m people considered at risk of becoming problem gamblers. Alarming 12% of under 16s are gambling each week according to the Gambling Commission.

Contacts for Gambling services are National Gambling Helpline:

0800 8020 133 or via webchat at www.gamcare.org.uk

Open from 8am – Midnight, 7 days a week

The first session after lunch was about demystifying benefits provided by "entitledto" around state benefits and the change to universal credit for members who may need to apply due to their vulnerabilities.

The benefit checker, where members can calculate their entitlement to Universal Credit can be found at the below link:

<https://unison.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

The afternoon revolved around carers and the number of unpaid carers. Margaret Dangoor from Carers uk addressed seminar. This session highlighted that many of our members could be carers, struggling to balance work commitments with caring responsibilities.

There are 6.5 million people caring in the UK and many of these are caring unpaid, over 2m people have given up work to care and 3m carers have had to reduce their working hours in order to carry out caring responsibilities, by 2030 1 in 3 people will become carers.

The final session of the day was on Understanding Loss and Bereavement from the organisation Cruse.

Cruse is an organisation that supports people who have experienced bereavement and it is almost entirely made up of volunteers with only a few paid staff. All individuals that work with Cruse are trained to provide the service. To access Cruse's services visit:

www.cruse.org.uk