

Branch Welfare Officer - Report to AGM 2018

I would like to begin this report with a massive THANK YOU to all our members of Unison in the support you gave me when in MAY 2017 I took up the challenge of a 26 mile hike through medium to rough mostly rough terrain, I can assure you. Even though it was advertised as "A walk through the beautiful Pyrenees" to raise money for a cause close to my heart "There For You" which is Unison Welfare fund. I joined up with 11 other Unison walkers (hailing from Dundee to Devon via Northern Ireland) for three days this walk (Hike) which I can only describe as "gruelling" and more so as the days went on. Each day with Fitbit at the ready the estimated steps averaging 33'000 per day, so around 99'000 steps over all later, I felt after climbing the Pyrenees I needed a "New Pair O' Knees." The initial target was for each participant to raise £1'600 and in October it was announced that the final total raised was in fact £20'000. So with that great news I'd like to extend my many thanks to whom without your support and your kind donations this would not have been possible.

While on this subject I would like to inform you that the donations just don't end here because the Scottish Welfare Committee are already in discussion on this year's fund raising events. They have applied for the appropriate license to allow them to organise a nationwide (Scotland Region) raffle. More details of this I will put on our Dundee Unison Web page so please get on board. It's now more than ever due to the constant cuts that we continue to support UNISON Welfare's General Fund, which helps our members on a daily basis with financial assistance or much needed debt advice. Also the Bucket and Spade Appeal which raises funds for short holidays giving a much needed break to UNISON members and their families after facing difficult circumstances such as a trauma, ill health or bereavement of a loved one.

Many members are still unaware of the Unison Charity "There For You" so I'm quickly going to inform you of what they do and why it's important to support this. Out of 80 branches across Scotland, average grants of £480.00 are paid to each individual branch. Therefore, branches are benefiting from more in paid grants to members rather than what donations they provide, and although "There For You" committee is very grateful for every donation made, whether by direct donation or fundraising events, we must do more. If two members from an individual branch receives one grant each this is almost £1000.00 very few branches donate that amount. Without breaking any confidentiality I can assure you that many of our members in the Dundee City Branch within the past year of 2017 have been helped and assisted through the Unison Charity "There for You" so it is hoping that the new lottery will inject the charity with a steady stream of income, so even more people can be helped. The outlook on the horizon for the families living on the poverty line is not going to change anytime soon. So like I have said once the Scottish Charity Lottery has all been finalised I will post on our Dundee Unison page under Welfare and on Face Book details of how you can join and links to register on line.

Fuel/Uniform Grants, the winter period is upon us and UNISON Welfare 'There For You' is once again making Winter Fuel Grants available to its members. Further details of this year's application form and criteria have already been issued with details and it's been published on the UNISON Scotland 'There For You' website. The closing date is Friday 16th February. If you have been too late to apply for this please get in touch with me so I can make sure your email address is included for the grant next year.

In fact I have received notification in regards to this, there seems to be a record number have applied for the winter fuel grant because from the 9th of February an e-mail was sent requesting Welfare Officers not to send out reminders to our members as the budget for this grant has nearly been reached already

In the meantime, The School Uniform Grant is available again, (*don't hesitate*) so please check out on the "There For You" web site where you can directly apply or if you need assistance please get in touch with me and I'll help talk you through it, or come and visit you in your home. It concerned me greatly, when I saw the figures from last year that in Unison Scotland, only "65" people in total applied for these grants. I feel the information for these grants are not reaching the right people who could greatly benefit from these awards. So I ask you Unison members to help me spread the word and let's get help to our members who really need it.

You would think that people who work hard to provide for their families would not need to apply for these benefits, but looking at today's MORE PAY CUT climate it looks bleak, and it certainly not looking like to improve in the near future. Thank goodness for Unison's Welfare Fund because without it a lot of our members would be suffering even more than they are now. A clear indication of the poverty we are in and facing I feel this has been highlighted to me when the Welfare Department say STOP no more applications for grants. That's a very strong statement to deliver and a realisation of what our members are going through, as Unison want to be "There For You" and assist through any hardship.

So please let's stand together and support the campaign "Pay Up Now" before those of you reading this finds yourself applying for these grants and being told sorry we have run out of money. Lastly I ask you to help with donations like the New Scottish Lottery, and the raffles I'm holding throughout the year, this will help greatly towards a bigger funding pot for people to apply to for assistance when needed.

Thank you Contact number if you want a confidential chat - 07788289024

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