



Welfare Newsletter

UNISON Scotland
September 2013



Special Interest Articles:

- Fundraising 2013
- Pedal for Scotland
- UNISON Welfare AGM
- Training for Welfare Officers
- Scotland Region - Branch Welfare Officers Seminar
- Welfare Reforms
- OCTOPUS Lottery
- Fundraising - Falkirk Wheel



Individual Highlights:

- Hold the back page!!

Regional Fundraising Events 2013

The Scottish Regional Welfare Committee decided not to arrange a sponsored walk or fun day for 2013, but hopefully to reintroduce an event for 2014. However, Olivia Dewar from Falkirk Branch participated in and completed the Charity Challenge 2013 South West Coastal Path Walk which is a 35 mile walk from Croyde Bay over 3 days. We are therefore asking branches to please support Olivia Dewar's excellent effort in completing this challenge for 'There for You' - UNISON's own charity, by donating as much as you can to Olivia's sponsorship. Falkirk branch covered Olivia's travel costs, so all donations will go to the charity. Olivia said she

was the only person from Scotland and was first to complete the walk so well done to her. As you are no doubt aware, during these unprecedented times, the demands on 'There for You' have been significantly increased, with many members struggling to provide for their families and pay for everyday necessities. For others, the situation will be much worse with homelessness or bankruptcy a real threat. In addition, with the benefit changes coming on stream during 2013 affecting tax credits and other benefits, even more of our members will be severely disadvantaged. While the support that UNISON must

continue to provide through its own charity has never been more vital, the increasing need for the service is putting pressure on the charity's finances meaning that your support is even more necessary. I urge you to take this request to your branch committees to help with our fundraising this year and help Olivia to meet her sponsorship target. Please send all donations, made payable to UNISON Welfare to: Diane Anderson UNISON Scotland, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow, G1 6RX. With thanks from Adanna Brown, Chair, Scottish Regional Welfare Committee.

UNISON team Pedal for Scotland

UNISON Scotland's Regional Welfare Committee is looking for members to join a UNISON team to take part in the Pedal for Scotland cycle from Glasgow to Edinburgh on Sunday the 8th of September. We need at least 5 riders to enter the Corporate Ride and each rider needs to have £100 to join the team. Branches are asked to sponsor a member to participate. Further fundraising through sponsorship by workmates, family and friends is entirely optional but could help to raise a good sum for the Welfare Fund. Corporate teams get to enjoy additional benefits on the ride as well as the

comradeship of fellow UNISON members. Details of the ride can be found at <http://www.pedalforScotland.org/>. Branches that are willing to sponsor a rider, even if you don't have one from your own branch should contact Diane Anderson at diane.anderson@unison.co.uk or contact Stephen Smellie at stephen.smellie@southlanarkshire.gov.uk for more information (including bike etiquette, lycra fashion advice and how to fix a puncture). All cheques should be sent to Diane Anderson, UNISON Scotland, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow, G2 6RX, made payable to UNISON Welfare.



UNISON Welfare AGM held on 16th May 2013



This year's AGM was held at UNISON headquarters in London. The morning started with an informal event which included promotional stalls and a chance to meet other delegates over coffee. The morning continued with a number of presentations which were very useful. First up was the return of Jane Clack (see below) who gave a talk on trends and changes over the last year in regard to the effects of the recession and how UNISON's debt line has helped our members. Angela Clements from Citysave, a credit union based in Birmingham promoted credit unions being part of the solution in encouraging our members to not use payday loan companies who charge extraordinary interest rates for short term loans. Anna Fraser from the England Illegal Money Lending Team

gave a presentation on 'Stop the Loan Sharks' - a guide on how welfare organisations like ourselves, know how to spot an illegal money lender in order to help their clients. We were then introduced to Catherine Connors, a former welfare rights officer, now working in Salford Council's Children's Centre providing advice to parents and families about money issues, benefits advice, debt and affordable credit etc. Catherine also explained how she trains staff and other organisations and is currently working with the Child Poverty Action Group. Finally, Allison Roche from UNISON's Policy and Public Affairs Unit described how she is working jointly with the Welfare Reform Consortium, comprising of 30 representative welfare expert groups challenging the negative impacts of the

Welfare Reform Act by working with MP's, Lords and the Department for Works and Pensions to highlight changes needed in the new benefit regulations. UNISON represents many members on low pay who have to claim benefits /tax credits in order for themselves and their families to survive. UNISON is campaigning for a welfare service to truly support in and out of work families and individuals alongside the need for employers to pay a decent living wage and the provision of free affordable childcare. Delegates were also advised that the new UNISON Welfare 'There for you' website is due to go-live in October 2013. We have requested copies of all the presentations so that we can distribute these.

Training for Welfare Officers held on 26th - 28th April 2013

UNISON Welfare once again organised an accredited training event this year at the Jury's Inn, Glasgow. By attending the training, volunteers learned how to develop their role and how to promote UNISON Welfare 'There for you' to their branch and members. The course included the role of the Branch Welfare Officer, criteria for financial

assistance, communication skills, promotion, publicity and influence amongst many other subjects. It was also a great chance to meet other Branch Welfare Officers to network and learn from each other's experiences. New Welfare Officer Barry Nicol said 'the weekend was well organised and the level of training was of a high standard. I believe that

everyone who attended the course left having learned a great deal more than when they first arrived. The most enlightening part for me was when I discovered that 'There for you' was actually a charity in its own right, and that it relied on donations from Unison branches to survive.'

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Branch Welfare Officers Seminar held on 3/4th November 2012

The Scottish Welfare Seminar was held at the Stirling Highland Hotel with 31 delegates from across the country attending. The topics covered were very wide ranging and all sessions were found to be very informative and would assist branch welfare officers in their efforts to assist our members. The topics are detailed here and the contact details of the relevant speakers where available. Some of the feedback from the delegates included improving the way UNISON Welfare 'There for you' communicates to branch welfare officers either directly or through the Regional Welfare Committee and a number of areas have been identified for example - this newsletter, the Scotland in UNISON newspaper and both the regional and national websites. We will be continuing to work on this and keep you updated. In the meantime get information at <http://www.unison->

[scotland.org.uk/welfare/](http://www.unison.org.uk/welfare/) or <http://www.unison.org.uk/welfare/> for more details. Here are some of the topics covered at last year's seminar and details of this year's seminar are on page 5 of this newsletter 'Hold the back page!!'. Our very own co-opted member of the committee Andy Douglas gave a presentation on credit unions and their benefits. Jill Gilday - sbe@familyfund.org.uk from the Family Fund (0141 946 0011) told us how they help disabled children and their families. Ross Craig - ross.craig@elizabethfinn.org.uk from Turn2us (www.turn2us.org.uk) gave a presentation on how the charitable organisation he works for can help our members gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help. Saima Akhtar and Gillian Pearson from West Lothian Council's Welfare Rights Team gave an

overview on the impact of welfare reforms and the impact it could have on our members and their families. Also, we had the opportunity to listen to Tim Weir - tim.weir@thompsons-scotland.co.uk from Thompsons Solicitors (0141 221 8840) regarding the services they can provide our members with Wills, Living Wills and Power of Attorney matters. Finally we can't forget our Money Advice Consultant Jane Clack - jane.clack@payplan.com from Payplan, UNISON Welfare's very own debt advice agency and she gave us an insight into how Payplan's debt line can help our members deal with the burden of debt and help improve our member's lives. If you would like any further information regarding these topics, please contact us.



Les Chalmers retires from being a long serving welfare officer. He is pictured receiving a gift from Maureen Le Marinel on behalf of the Scottish Regional Welfare Committee.

Government report shows welfare reforms are not working

The government has produced its evaluation report on the 13 local authority-led universal credit pilots.

It highlights six real challenges and problems that the government faces in its plans to roll out universal credit. These are the same concerns and issues that UNISON has been raising in its campaign against welfare reforms and have now proved to be key barriers in its welfare reform agenda.

Because the government went full steam ahead with its reform agenda without listening to key concerns from expert welfare representative groups and community organisations - including UNISON - at the time of the bill and regulations, the timetable, the roll out for welfare reform has now been delayed. More information can be found on the web at:-

<http://www.unison.org.uk/news/articles/unison-says-welfare-reforms-are-not-working>

there
for you
supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough



Play OCTOPUS - UNISON Welfare Lottery

Introducing the Octopus Lottery - the UNISON Welfare Monthly prize draw. Every year we help thousands of members with grants, wellbeing breaks, free debt advice and a wide range of support services. To be able to provide this support we rely on UNISON members and branches to help us with fundraising and the Octopus Lottery Monthly prize draw is one of the ways we can do this. Up to 50% of the total money raised from ticket sales is paid out as prizes and administration costs are kept very low at just 10%. You can buy up to a maximum of 10 numbers at

£1 each (branches may buy more) which will be automatically entered into each month's prize draw. So unlike some prize draws you do not need to remember to enter each month. We need Branch Welfare Officers to promote this fundraising lottery at their branch committees or executives to encourage take up of multiple ticket purchases from their branches which would contribute to much needed funds for UNISON Welfare and if your branch wins, you could encourage your branch to invest the prize money in fund raising events like the Scottish

Region's Falkirk Wheel during 2012 or a local event your branch would like to organise. If your branch or your members would like to sign up to play Octopus Lottery please complete the application form and direct debit form held online at <http://www.unison.org.uk/octopus/>.



Over 50 cash prizes every month including a first prize of £1000!



Falkirk Wheel Fundraising Event held on 9th September 2012

The Regional Welfare Committee would like to thank all members who attended the above event. Amongst those attending were UNISON members and their families, branch welfare officers, regional representatives and other activists from all over Scotland. This fundraising event was a great success with a total being raised in excess of £6000 towards UNISON Welfare's Bucket & Spade Appeal. The Falkirk Wheel offered lots of things to do for the whole family and fundraising

events included boat rides, craft stalls, raffle prizes, sponsored walks and zorbing. There was also a picnic area and child's play area, but for the more active members there was also a cycle route and nature trails. You can check the event site out and see what's to offer at www.thefalkirkwheel.co.uk if you or your family and friends wish to visit. We would also like to thank the staff at the Falkirk Wheel who work for Scottish Canals - British Waterways Scotland who are UNISON members, for all their hard

work in helping us make this event such a success. Thanks of course is also expressed for those donations kindly made by branches across Scotland which has helped considerably towards our fundraising appeal. We are all looking forward to running another event soon and to aim higher in regard to the number of members attending with their families from their respective branches and to double what we raised last year to help in such a worthwhile cause for our members in UNISON.



UNISON Scotland Region (Extra)

Hold the back page!!

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We're on the Web!!

See us at:

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/welfare/>

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And finally...remember...the next Scottish Welfare Seminar

This year's seminar will be held at the Kings Manor Hotel in Edinburgh on the weekend of the 9th /10th of November. Although, we can't confirm the seminar's programme for the weekend or our guest speakers yet, once organised I'm sure it will be as informative as last year's - see above. By attending it also gives UNISON Branch Welfare Officers the chance to meet with each other again or to meet for the first time.

Further details will follow very soon, so please get these dates provisionally in your diary in the hope you can attend this important event.

The Kings Manor, Edinburgh offers great conference facilities for us to have an informal but productive seminar for Branch Welfare Officers to network and learn from each other's experiences in dealing with the challenges ahead for our charity and our members.

