

Celebrating 25 years in UNISON



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UNISON came into being 25 years ago and since then we have gone from strength to strength, in spite of hostile trade union legislation and attempts to decimate and privatise our public services.

Three unions – Nupe, Nalgo and Cohse came together on 1 July 1993 on ‘Vesting Day’ to form one union to represent all public service workers – wherever they work.

Around 80% of our 1.3 million members are women – making us the biggest organisation representing women in the UK.

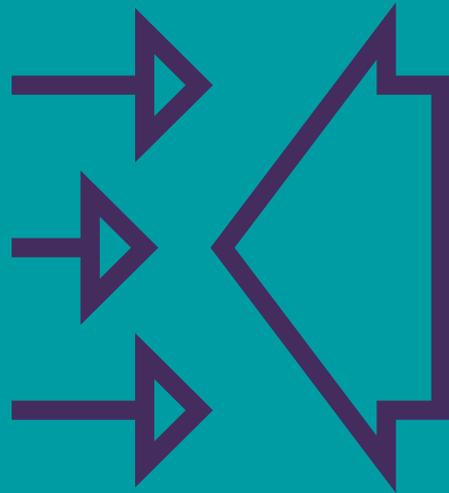
That alone is cause for celebration. But there’s plenty more too and as a young, forward-looking union that is proud of its past, we will be celebrating for the whole year – from July 2018 to June 2019.

Things are difficult for public services and the dedicated staff who provide them. We can’t forget the cuts, privatisation and pay restraint that have become an unwelcome part of our members’ lives. But we will never forget how proud we are of our members, proud of the jobs they do and proud of the public services they provide.

That is why we are taking this opportunity to celebrate 25 years of our achievements. This is an ideal opportunity to remember why it’s good to belong to a union that is campaigning, caring and visionary – and here for the next 25 years and beyond.

There is so much about UNISON to be proud of and we can’t possibly catch it all here. So, for all the achievements; all the dedicated service our members have given to the public; the hard work our reps have given to our members; for the work our staff put in; and the thousand ways you have made life that bit better for someone else – take a moment to say, “Well done. We’re proud of you. And here’s to the next 25 years!”

Our anniversary celebrations will run through until June next year and we are inviting branches to share this special year with members and potential members.



Look back, look forward

A 25th birthday is a milestone for us here in UNISON, but by putting it in the context of all we do and all we have achieved in a short time, our aim is to make our birthday relevant to a much wider audience.

The achievements over the last 25 years are a great illustration of the value of a union: tackling the issues we face at work and standing together to defend the public services we all rely on.

We are there when members have a problem at work, but we also have a clear view of the future of public services. That vision can engage and inspire communities to join us in demanding properly resourced public services.

So, let’s celebrate and let’s showcase all that is good about UNISON and encourage more people to get involved in what we do.

www.unison.org.uk/25





Fairness first

In the last 25 years UNISON has led the way on equality issues, not just in the trade union movement, but across society.

We started by putting fairness and equality at the very heart of our union by creating independent structures for women, black members, LGBT and disabled members. Those structures enable us to support those most discriminated against in our workplaces. At the same time, we campaign for an end to discrimination across society, both at home and abroad.

We played a key role in the campaign to win equal rights on partner pensions and marriage for LGBT people; we were there fighting for the Disability Discrimination Act; we did not stand silent when Stephen Lawrence was murdered and we do not turn a blind eye to injustice – wherever we see it.

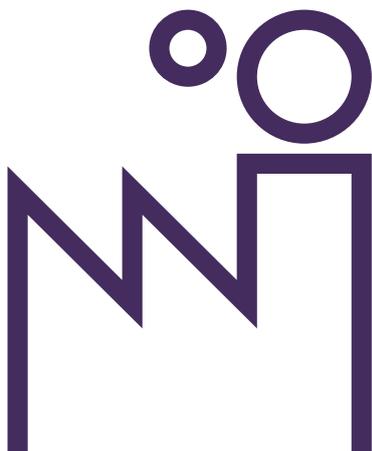
www.unison.org.uk/equality

In the workplace

UNISON workplace representatives are the beating heart of our union. These volunteers are the first port of call for members who face trouble at work. Our stewards, health and safety and equalities reps are all there for members on a daily basis.

We are proud of our training – and preparing our reps to take on the responsibility that they face in negotiations, grievances, re-organisations, outsourcing, problem-solving and life-long learning.

We have around 30,000 reps across the UK today and in the last 25 years we have trained tens of thousands of UNISON reps.



Winning for workers

We have all benefitted from the work of trade unions. For 100 years and more trade unions have fought for and won many things that we take for granted – weekends off, maternity leave, rights for part-time workers, stronger health and safety laws and more.

Before they merged to form UNISON, our predecessor unions were very much part of those victories and UNISON has carried on the proud tradition. Nowhere is that clearer to see than in the fight for the national minimum wage.

Until the National Minimum Wage Act in 1998 unscrupulous employers could pay very low wages without fear. And many of them did. It was UNISON that campaigned relentlessly and persuaded the Labour government to enshrine the minimum wage in law. This lifted the wages of around 1.5 million people overnight – two-thirds of them women. But we didn't stop there. We continue to fight for better pay and a 'Living Wage' above the legal minimum.

Learning with UNISON

3,000 trained union learning reps encourage and support members to continue their learning in UNISON. School wasn't for everyone – but we strongly believe that lifelong learning is. We help with building confidence as well as personal and professional development.

Through the Union Learning Fund (ULF) we support learning initiatives, learning agreements and activities within the branch (which is not only a proven recruitment tool, but better still, changes lives).

In the current climate, where many employers do not invest in training for lower paid and part-time workers, we aim to give members the chances they deserve. Search 'Hasmita' at www.unison.org.uk for a truly inspiring story about learning with UNISON.

<https://learning.unison.org.uk>





Be safe

Safety from bullying, discrimination, violence, and dangerous workplaces is core to UNISON's work. Today, UNISON has 5,000 safety activists working hard to promote good health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace. In our young life we have trained thousands of safety reps – over 600 in the last 18 months. Our biennial health and safety seminar attracts over 300 UNISON safety activists making it UNISON's biggest seminar. We take it seriously.

www.unison.org.uk/safety

Winning in the courts

Since UNISON was formed, our legal assistance scheme has helped thousands of members and their families achieve access to justice. From accident and occupational disease cases to assaults at work and negligence of employers, UNISON has fought for justice.

Since UNISON was created we have won a staggering £727.5 million in compensation for our members. That is nearly £30 million every year.

In 2017, UNISON won the most significant judicial intervention in the history of British employment law, turning over punitive law and seeing off employment tribunal fees. It took a nail-biting four-year legal battle, culminating in UNISON's victory in the Supreme Court. We don't give up. This victory has guaranteed access to justice for millions of people.

In the Court of Appeal we recently secured the legal right to be consulted over workplace issues that involve our members. While right now we are fighting the biggest claim ever for the national minimum wage on behalf of home care workers – giving them a voice and supporting them in their fight for pay justice.

www.unison.org.uk/legal



Generation UNISON

In 25 years a generation of young people were born, have grown up and are now making their way in the world as young adults. More than 60,000 of them are UNISON members. We want to show young people that being in a union is something for today, not something from the past. And we want them to show us what the future can look like.

Getting generation UNISON into the union is a key target for our 25th anniversary year. Make it part of yours too.

www.unison.org.uk/young



Bargain and negotiate

Every week a thousand negotiations take place that never make the headlines. It's what we do. The news may be grim, but tireless negotiations behind the scenes lessen the impact of cuts and redundancies where we can't stop them.

It might influence what happens to one person's job or the very structures themselves – affecting thousands. We stand together regardless.

For example, years of tireless negotiations led to Agenda for Change in 2004 – this union's hard work, vision and determination totally transformed the NHS pay structures. In 2018 we have worked with the other NHS unions to bring it up to date and incorporate the Living Wage for around 100,000 NHS staff.

And our Ethical Care Charter – demanding decent standards of care for our elderly and vulnerable – seeks to affect fundamental changes at the base level of commissioning as well as delivery. Already 41 local authorities have signed up to the charter.

In 2007, years of negotiating culminated in recognition for hundreds of thousands of school support staff in the School Support Staff Negotiating Body in England. To our dismay, a vengeful new government wiped out the SSSNB, but we continue to campaign for the recognition and professionalisation of school support staff. In Wales they have won the first step of professional registration. But we won't give up till we have properly recognised support staff across the UK.

www.unison.org.uk/bargaining-guides



Taking our message to the voters

One of the things we are most proud of is the number of UNISON members who have, with our support, gone on to play a full role in public life by becoming elected to represent their local communities.

We have members who have become councillors, MPs, MSPs and Welsh Assembly members. London Mayor Sadiq Khan is a UNISON member as are the mayors of South Yorkshire and Greater Manchester – and many other decision-makers too.

We supported the creation of devolved government in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Our very own first Black president, Eleanor Smith, made history in 2017 when she became the first Black female West Midlands MP taking Enoch Powell's former seat of Wolverhampton South West.

And of course we are proud to be affiliated to the Labour Party.

www.unison.org.uk/labourlink

Beyond the workplace

UNISON takes the fight to support our members beyond the workplace. For example, in 2015 our campaign forced the government to abandon cuts to tax credits that would have seen three million households, many of them UNISON members, losing over £3bn a year.

And since 1993 we have supported hundreds of organisations in the community whose aims and values echo our own. Hope not Hate, Show Racism the Red Card, the Labour Party, Waspi (campaigning for pension equality), Shelter, Citizens Advice, Amnesty International, War on Want, Gingerbread (working with single parent families), the People's Assembly (grassroots campaigners) to name just a few.



Keep the light burning across the world

UNISON, and its predecessor unions, have always been about more than looking after members in the workplace here in the UK. Through our partnerships with other trade unions globally we seek to bring our values of rights for workers, anti-discrimination, equality and fairness to the world stage.

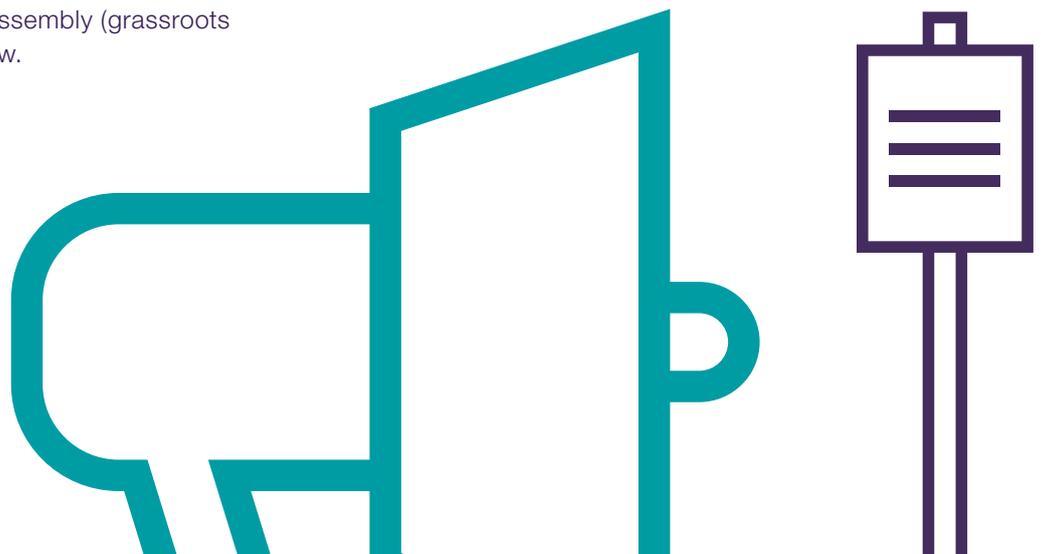
Since 2005, UNISON's International Development Fund has supported 95 projects in 45 countries with sister unions fighting privatisation, empowering women, tackling HIV/AIDS in the workplace, organising LGBT and young workers and responding to the Ebola pandemic.

In 1994, UNISON honorary life member Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected black president of South Africa. UNISON and its predecessor unions had always campaigned against apartheid and supported the South African people.

UNISON knows all too well that public services across the world are continually under threat from changes to international trade agreements that open them up to the possibility of privatisation. From the 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services to TTIP, UNISON has campaigned successfully to keep public services out of free trade agreements and against the negative impact of free trade.

In 2017, UNISON was the first UK union to publish a 'Transparency in Supply Chains' statement in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act and became the first trade union in Europe to join Electronics Watch – making a commitment to challenge labour rights abuses in its own IT purchasing.

www.unison.org.uk/international





There for You – when things get too tough

And when things get really tough for our members, we have our own charity – There for You.

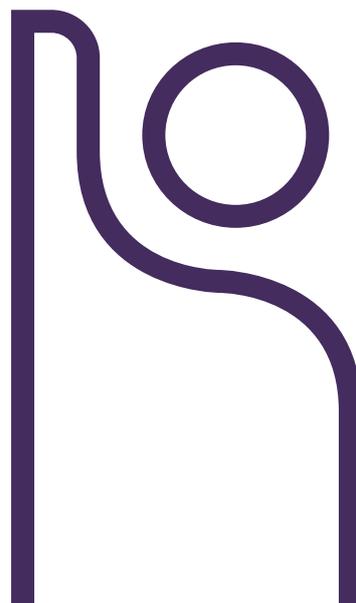
- Since 1993 There for You has given more than £16 million in financial assistance to members.
- Our small grants programme has helped around 4,000 people through our winter fuel grants and around the same number have received help with our school uniform grants.
- We introduced emergency grants for when there is no money at all to put food on the table or money in the gas meter. Every emergency grant request is considered within 24 hours.
- Our 800 welfare officers are always on hand to help members and their contribution must not be underestimated.
- UNISON Debtline has helped members with over £200 million of unmanageable debt since we launched the service in 2000.
- Our charity challenge events (launched in 2003) have raised over £1.3 million. Some of which has been used to help members and their families get away for a break following ill-health, family breakdown, and other difficult circumstances through our Wellbeing Programme.

There for You does so much more. Discover it at:

www.unison.org.uk/there-for-you

There is much of our history and achievements we have not included here, which is why we would love to add your stories, your successes and your celebrations to the store. Tell us more at:
campaigns@unison.co.uk

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