

there
for you supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough

Get help staying warm this winter

With rising fuel costs and another cold winter many members are worried about how they're going to pay this year's winter fuel bills.

Help is on hand

"There for You" has set up a limited fund to help UNISON members on low income by way of a one-off payment of up to £50.

To apply and download the application form visit unison.org.uk/thereforyou or simply contact your UNISON branch office.



UNISON
the public service union

There for you is the working name of UNISON Welfare, a registered charity supported by UNISON the trade union. Registered charity no. 1023552/SC038305

Best Wishes for 2017

It is going to be another difficult year for local government. This government is continuing to reduce funding to councils and Southend is looking at around £10 million savings this year. After the budget updates on 11th January we will be clearer about where the cuts may fall.

As a union branch we will do our best to support our members wherever you work - but we need you to be involved as well. Keep us informed about what happens in your area and make sure you have your say.

Many members will be affected by local changes such as the Trading Company which affects some services for adults. Schools members face further academisation and changes to the Schools Funding Formula which will mean yet more cuts.

If we stand and work together over these issues we can make a difference and UNISON will be there to support our members.

Despite cuts and austerity we are still recruiting members and stewards and we ask every member to think about being more active - could you be a contact for your department or workplace or even a local rep?

Can you support campaigns UNISON is involved in? For instance we support the fight to stop the downgrading of Southend A&E which is highlighted inside this newsletter.

Unions are in the news at the moment because of strikes in the Post Office, railways and airlines. It shows that we can fight back!

Every member can play their part by recruiting colleagues and friends into UNISON.

If we work together then 2017 can be a year when we challenge the attacks on pay, jobs and services.



Claire Wormald,
Branch Secretary

Southend UNISON backs 'Stand Up To Racism'



Southend branch Executive Committee has decided to back a national campaign set up to resist racism and scapegoating.

'Stand Up To Racism' has organised a number of successful conferences and events, including taking support to refugees in Calais.

UNISON has many members who are from ethnic minorities or who are themselves immigrants from all over the world. Indeed, our public and care services would grind to a halt without those people.

We need unity in the face of the attacks on services and pay, not

division. It can only weaken trade unions if we give in to ideas that immigrants and minorities are to blame for what is wrong. This message is more important than ever in the face of Trump's campaign in the US and the rise in racism we've seen after the Brexit vote.

Stand Up To Racism are organising a big march and rally in London on March 18th, which is UN anti-racism day. They have also arranged a conference especially for trade unionists on Saturday 4th February.

UNISON will support members who wish to attend either event - contact the office if you would like to go.

A Big Thank You!

To all those who attended our annual Xmas social at the Civic Centre - the raffle tickets you bought raised £120 for UNISON's Welfare Fund! (This Fund goes to help members who face particular financial difficulties and who apply to the Fund through our Welfare Officer).

Everyone who came along enjoyed a great evening and a chance to meet up with other UNISON members from the area.

Tell your friends and colleagues and get them along next year!

Contact UNISON Southend-on-Sea Local Government Branch of UNISON

Union Office, Lower Ground Floor, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea SS2 6ER

Tel: 01702 215980 Email: Unison@southend.gov.uk



Public sector Pensions- Will you get capped?

One of the benefits of public sector pensions schemes has always been that there is protection for your pension if the employer makes you redundant.

For instance, in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) anyone over 55 who is made redundant is entitled to claim the full value of their pension to date (unlike choosing to go early where your pension is reduced).

The Government have now decided that us outrageously highly-paid public sector workers are getting too much out of the deal!

They had a headline policy which said that people would be capped at £100,000 if they were made redundant.

Doesn't sound unfair, after all anyone getting £100,000 on redundancy must be a fat cat, right?

Wrong! By the time you add together the cost of redundancy pay and the cost of the employer making up the pension protection, you don't have to be a high earner to fall foul

of the cap (which they've actually set at £95,000).

If you've got long service, then many social workers, junior managers, 'professionals', nurses and others will be affected.

One way or another, staff are likely to lose out either on redundancy payments or pension.

It's a stitch-up - the government cut funding to public services meaning that many people end up leaving early, but then they say we're being given too much by way of compensation for getting the boot.

It also means that the longer the service you've given to the public, the more likely you are to lose out!

We believe that this mean and nasty policy is to be implemented in early 2017.

If you are or believe you may be threatened with redundancy and want to check if you will be affected, approach your employer for a pensions estimate or contact UNISON for further advice.

Thanks to all those who helped on UNISON's SOS Day on 16th November to stand up for services for older people. We collected signatures supporting the 'Ethical Care Charter' for homecare and helped publicise the need to fund services.

Some of our members and supporters were snapped in the 'SOS day frames' and we got comments from staff and public about why these services are important.

I call on the government to increase funding to older people's social care services because:

OUR NHS - The threat from the 'STP'



As UNISON's 'Eastern Eye' health newspaper points out, the NHS is underfunded not overspent!

The latest attack on services is in the form of a national initiative called the 'Sustainability and Transformation

Plan'. This works by dividing the country up into 44 'footprint' areas, each of which has to make cuts.

Southend is lumped together with Basildon and Chelmsford as a Mid and South Essex area. It has to save £216 million!

How do they plan to do this? Well, the exercise has been quite secret, but the main plan is to upgrade one of the three A&Es at Southend, Basildon or Chelmsford - and 'downgrade' the other two (possibly to 'walk in centres'),

Is it really acceptable to rely on an ambulance dash from Shoebury to Basildon, along the A13 or the A127? It's a recipe for disaster - not just for people at the furthest ends of the 'footprint' but for everyone who would have to rely on a single overstretched department.

There is a campaign to save our A&E departments. You can sign the paper petition in the UNISON office and also an online petition:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/hands-off-southend-accident-and-emergency-department>

Dates For Your Diary

Thursday 12th January	Southend UNISON Branch Executive Committee - all members welcome	3pm-5pm, Committee Room 3, Civic Centre
17th-19th June	Local Government Conference	Brighton
20th-24th June	National UNISON conference	Brighton
Contact UNISON if you are interested in going to these conferences as a delegate or an observer		

Rob Tinlin Retires from Southend

Southend Council's Chief Executive, Rob Tinlin, is retiring after 12 years as the Council's most senior officer. UNISON wishes Rob well in the future and we asked him if he had any words for us about the value of trade unions. Here is Rob's message:



"However good your employer is, there is real value in being a member of a relevant trade union. Trade union membership isn't just for the bad times but it is there to work for you throughout the year. The Council works with and consults its recognised trade unions on a regular basis on many issues, such as terms and conditions of service, budgets, HR policies and much more, and your trade union is also there to act for you at times of personal difficulty. I commend trade union membership to you."

Did you know...

...under Southend on Sea's Sickness Absence Policy (page 33), you are entitled to have absence through industrial disease, accident or assault arising out of or in the course of employment with the local authority to be treated separately from absence in respect of normal sickness.

Periods of absence in respect of one shall not be set off against the other for the purpose of calculating entitlements under the scheme.

Make sure the employer respects your rights - contact UNISON if they won't honour this policy!