

UNISON *In Cafcass*

KEEPING YOU IN THE LOOP

Issue 1

JUNE 2009

This is the first of many UNISON electronic bulletins. We are conscious that whilst we are representing your interests locally, regionally and nationally we need to do more on keeping members fully informed, which in turn gives the impression UNISON isn't working. Well it is and we are!



CAR PARKING

Cafcass are enforcing changes to ensure

compliance with the T&S policy on the basis that the expenses should not have been re paid previously.

This is a unilateral change in customary practice and UNISON has previously urged members to lodge collective grievances to try to address and find local solutions in the face of this draconian new policy.

We will be monitoring these grievances at the National Partnership Committee, and may well have to lodge a national dispute.

SPR UPDATE

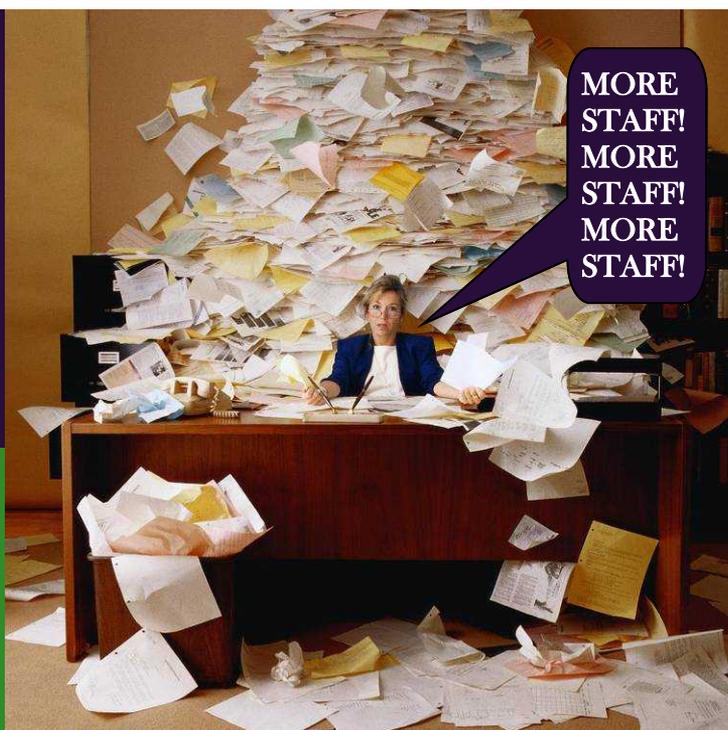
We have now received definitive legal advice from UNISONs solicitors on the SPR package which the national committee is currently considering - UNISON expects to be writing to all members shortly.

UNISON STEWARDS COMMITTEE

Our Committee usually meets bi monthly in Manchester. Future meetings will be held around the 3 areas including Birmingham in July and Leeds in September.

RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISING PLAN

We have now agreed a recruitment and organising plan which involves auditing our membership base, identifying where non members are and recruiting new stewards and health & safety representatives.



MORE STAFF!
MORE STAFF!
MORE STAFF!

WORKLOADS AND REALLOCATION

Merseyside and Cheshire teams are facing major changes to their working practices, new duty system, and systems for reallocation of workloads. More staff are desperately needed to cope with the increase in existing and coming workloads, and all the new statutory demands and practice improvements. Whilst we are working on a workloads policy we are still no nearer determining what is a manageable workload nor how should this be allocated and to whom.

We are desperately trying to pull all these factors into a framework approach so we don't face a piece meal and disjointed range of practices throughout Cafcass.

GET ACTIVE IN UNISON
 UNISON is a democratic member led organisation. Our collective strength is built on solid workplace organisation where we have a steward and health & safety rep in every workplace. To become more active in UNISON you may want to take on one of the following roles

Workplace Contact
 This is a more informal role for someone who is interested in becoming a steward or health and safety rep and wants to find out more about what's involved. Workplace Contacts:

- Make sure members receive union and other important information
- Help groups of members to organise more effectively
- Maintain contact between members and the union where there is an elected steward
- Support other activists such as stewards or health & safety reps.

Steward
 Stewards are the backbone of UNISON. Without stewards there would be no one there to act as the link between members and the union and to organise and support people in the workplace. As a steward you can:

- Talk to, recruit and organise members around workplace issues
- Talk to members about workplace problems, advise them and keep them informed of latest developments
- Represent members in your workplace
- Be involved in how your branch

Health & Safety Rep
 Health & Safety reps work to make the workplace as safe as possible. They can:

- Make representations to the employer on behalf of members on any health, safety and welfare matter
 - Represent members in consultation with Health and Safety Executive inspectors or other enforcing authorities
 - Inspect designated workplace areas at least every three months
 - Investigate any potential hazards, complaints by members and causes of accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases
- Employers are obliged by law to carry out risk assessments which identify dangers in the workplace and look at how likely they are to cause harm. Health and safety reps can help make sure this happens.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?
 To take on any of these roles within the branch why not have an informal chat about what the roles involve; what training and support you will receive; and what your rights at work are to represent members contact:

Vance Butterworth
 (Branch Secretary)
 0161 872 4802

David Jolly
 (Assistant Branch Secretary)
 07786277597



TRADE UNION FACILITIES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

We have finalised a revised Time Off Agreement for our representatives, giving them the full legal rights allowable under law to assist and represent you at work, including an annual sum of hours which we can allocate to reps as we see fit — this has also allowed us to give full time release to our national Chairperson DAVID JOLLY, whose mission this year is to visit every Cafcass office to meet members and recruit non-members to make us stronger.



Linked with this is a revised National Partnership Agreement. In brief this gives us at last full legal collective bargaining rights under law to better represent UNISON members for all sorts of workplace and industrial relations issues.

HOW DOES THIS WORK? Simply put, there is a National Partnership Committee which addresses all strategic and industrial relations issues. In each of the 3 areas there is a Regional Partnership Committee which seeks to address regional/local issues of a collective nature. Where there are failures to agree on issues regionally, these are then referred to the NPC. UNISON works jointly with Napo and PCS trade Unions at both levels.

EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Whilst we are nearly there to acceptable revisions after having managed to successfully incorporate amendments to the Policy as raised by members, one big stumbling block is the 100 mile benchmark determining long journeys.



Nationally we had agreed (and it is all formally minuted and endorsed) that as we had accepted the changed Essential car user scheme, the 100 mile limit had been removed. Members kept telling us that *'no it wasn't'*, so having checked you were right. Cafcass nationally claimed there had not been an agreement on this, when shown the written agreement, they then said *'Oh we don't recall that'* - well to my mind an agreement is an agreement, so we'll press on!



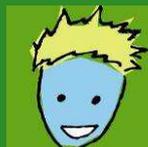
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP SUCCESS

It is great that UNISON has the direct ears of MPs as we meet regularly with a working group of MPs along with the other Unions which allow us to have input into the political sphere. Our recent achievements include:

- **Questions being raised in Parliament on the removal of media restrictions in the Family Courts**
- **An early Day Motion warning Parliament that the ever increasing statutory and practice demands you face run the risk of severely interfering with safe 'safeguarding' practices.**

YOUR REPRESENTATIVES AT WORK

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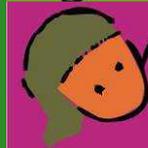
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10 Good Reasons to Join UNISON

1. You can earn more - Year on year, UNISON wins pay rises for its members. Average earnings are around eight per cent higher in unionised workplaces.
2. You're more likely to get equal pay - UNISON is campaigning to bring women's pay into line with men's. Workplaces with union recognition are 20 per cent more likely to have an equal opportunities policy.
3. You get more holiday - UNISON has won increased leave for many of its members wherever they work.
4. You get more and better training - UNISON provides courses to help you learn new skills, improve existing ones and develop your career. Since 1994 UNISON has won agreements with employers to pay for courses and provide time off for employees to attend them.
5. You get more maternity leave or parental leave - If you belong to UNISON, your employer is more likely to have parental leave policies which are more generous than the statutory minimum.
6. You're less likely to be injured at work - UNISON health and safety stewards are trained to minimise the risk of workplace injuries and ensure that employers meet their legal obligations.
7. If you do get injured at work, you'll get better compensation - UNISON wins millions in legal compensation for people who are injured or become ill at work. We won over £37 million in 2004 for members and their families.
8. You're less likely to be discriminated against - UNISON campaigns for tougher laws to make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, age, disability or sexual orientation. Black and Asian trade unionists earn 32 per cent more than non-unionised colleagues.
9. You can help keep our public services public - UNISON campaigns against all forms of privatisation, including PFI and foundation hospitals. Where our members have been transferred to the private sector we have won them pay and employment protections.
10. You're less likely to be sacked - Trade union members are only half as likely to be sacked as non members.

Join UNISON

**Big enough to stand strong
in an uncertain climate**

And still care for every one



