

Introduction

Hello Everyone

It's already December and with Christmas and the end of the year just around the corner, we wanted to get in touch regarding the arrangements over the final few weeks of 2021.

But before we get into the practical arrangements, we wanted to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you from all the team at There for You to all our fantastic Branch Welfare Officers for the amazing work you have done throughout 2021 to support the more that more than 4,000 UNISON members who have received a grant from There for You during what has turned out to be another very difficult year. We hope that you will have a wonderful and well-earned break over the festive period and come back refreshed and ready to meet the challenges that will no doubt arise in 2022.

Christmas closure

A reminder that our offices will close from midday on **24 December** and re-open on **4 January**. During December, the casework team will be busy processing as many applications for financial assistance as possible received up to 2 December. Applications for financial assistance received after 2 December will be prioritised according to urgency in the normal way however assessment and processing will not start until the New Year.

Reasons for delays in processing applications

The most common reason for there being delays in processing applications is because of the lack of supporting documentation, particularly when applying for help through our main grant programme. Please help us to get help to the member quickly by ensuring that each application includes, as a minimum, the information requested on page 8 of the application form which states:

- ✦ If you and/or your partner are working enclose copies of most recent payslip
- ✦ Last **two** month's complete bank statements for all accounts held (including your partner) – statements should clearly show whose name they are in
- ✦ Copies of any recent correspondence from those you owe money to
- ✦ Copy of any bill which you would like us to consider that provides proof of the money you owe

General Data Protection Regulations

Irrespective of whether you've had GDPR training in your work role, as a branch welfare officer, **you are required to complete UNISON's GDPR e-note**. The information about how to do this can be found here Learning and Organising Services <https://e-learning.unison.org.uk> If you have any queries or require any help accessing the e-note please contact learningandorganising@unison.co.uk



COVID Response Fund – have your members been affected by the removal of the Universal Credit uplift?

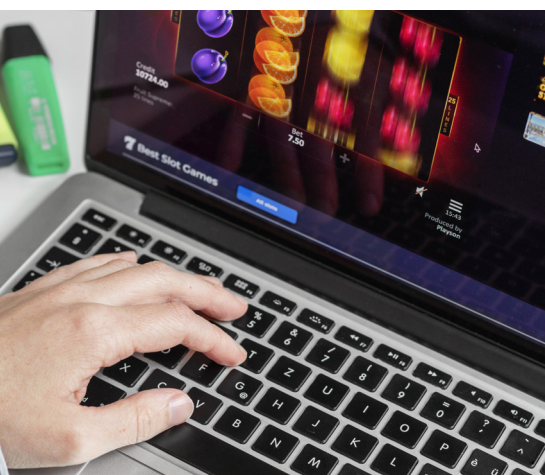
A reminder that members can still apply to the COVID Response Fund.

Latest news – members who are in financial difficulty as a direct result of COVID and who have lost the £20 Universal Credit uplift could be eligible to a £350 grant. To find out more go to our website www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/financial-assistance/

Free TUC online training about Online Gambling

The TUC's new online guide explains the extent of harmful gambling, who it affects and what you as a union rep can do to help.

For more information go to:
Get started



UNISON There for You Winter Fuel Grant Programme 2022

We are pleased to announce that our 2022 Winter Fuel Grant Programme will launch during January. Further details will be announced in due course however we are pleased to confirm that members will once again be able to apply online with paper applications accepted from those who are unable to apply this way.

We will also be updating our Help with Winter Fuel Costs guide however, in the meantime, we would draw your attention to the following initiatives:

Warm Home Discount Scheme for Winter 2021/22

The Warm Home Discount [WHD] is a government scheme that requires the largest energy suppliers to credit £1410 discount onto the electricity bills of certain low income households.

Recipients of the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit will receive a letter by mid-December advising whether the discount will be paid automatically by their energy supplier, or if they need to contact the WHD Helpline by 28 February 2022 to confirm

The WHD Helpline opened on 18 October 2021 – Tel 0800 731 0214

For more information go to:

Warm Home Discount Scheme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Winter Fuel Payment – a fuel payment of between £100 – £300 for people born on or before 26 September 1955

For more information go to:

Winter Fuel Payment - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Cold Weather Payment – You may get a Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits. It is a £25 payment triggered if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees celsius or below over 7 consecutive days between 1 November and 31 March

Household Support Fund. This is a fund to support vulnerable households in England to help them with essentials over the winter. It is administered through local authorities, information about the fund can be found here:

Household Support Fund: guidance for local councils - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Fuel Direct Scheme – This is available to help people on certain benefits who are in debt with the utility bills by having deductions towards those bills taken directly from their benefits and paid to the utility provider.

Information about the scheme can be found here:

Help paying bills using your benefits - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Reminder of free resources available to UNISON members to help manage their finances:

Budget Planner:

Our user friendly budget planner is free to use and can help you take control of your finances.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/budget-planner/>

Benefit Checker

Make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to with the UNISON Benefits Calculator, and see what help is available from benefits if you're affected by coronavirus.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/tax-credits-and-universal-credit/>

Debt Advice

Debtline, a debt advice service for UNISON members offering free and confidential advice to help you clear your debts and manage your money for the future

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/debtline-support/>

“In dark times good things can happen. And lives can be changed for the better.”

“I really appreciate your support at this very difficult time – not only because of the pandemic but also due to my personal circumstances.”

“You are lifesavers. I can pay off some bills that piled up over COVID and get myself some decent food.”

Donations to There for You

During the first nine months of 2021 a number of branches have made donations to There for You, totalling an incredible £171,254. As you can see from the articles above, and the quotes from members, the donations that we receive from branches enable us to provide grants to UNISON members in financial difficulties and make a very tangible difference to improving members lives. So at this point we wanted to say thank you, on behalf of all the members that your donations have helped, for your amazing generosity.

As 2021 draws to a close and branches begin to hold their Annual General Meetings please consider getting your branch to make a donation so that we can do even more in 2022, every single donation really does make a difference.

Date for Your Diary 2022:

**There for You Annual General Meeting:
12:00pm
Tuesday 14 June 2022
at National Delegate Conference –
Brighton Centre**

Lastly ... we hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and found the contents informative, if there is anything you would find useful, or would like us to include in future editions, please email Maggie Newell - Support Service Team Leader
m.newell@unison.co.uk