

Communicating with Members

All members of Unite receive a copy of the union's magazine "Unite - the magazine", we also issue a monthly e-bulletin which provides news and features of relevance to the sector, and engages in surveys relevant to the sector. For representatives more general advice on employment matters and news of our campaigns is provided through the magazine, "Unite - the activist". The main Unite web site www.unitetheunion.org provides general news and information as well as specific help and advice on health and safety/working environment issues. For the Community & Non Profit Sector we have a designated section at www.unitetheunion.org/nonprofit.

Training and Education

We believe that if our members are well trained and educated, they will be better able to cope with change, will be more employable, more successful and will get more out of life. For these reasons we offer a range of training courses for members. Our education department owns and uses many national training centres which offer a stimulating and relaxing environment in which to attend courses. In addition Unite offers a range of courses regionally and will tailor special courses to meet the needs of workers in your organisation providing that the numbers willing to attend can justify it. At the workplace, our Learning Organisers will help train and set strategies for elected or volunteer Learning Representatives from among the workforce, who can then provide regular guidance to employees on learning issues, how needs may be met etc.

Equalities Issues

Unite cares passionately about equalities issues. We offer many training courses and materials to support your work on equalities. Our National Officer for equalities ensures a continuous flow of quality information on this subject through our journals and newsletters to members. We run regular seminars and courses on matters such as equal pay, family friendly issues, tackling racism at work, working for diversity, dealing with disability issues and so on. Structures exist within the union from the national level to region and then to the workplace, so that everyone who wants to engage with the union is encouraged to do so, particularly from under-represented groups. Committees and working groups within the union deal with every dimension of equality including women, race, disability and youth.

Health and Safety

Unite has a long history of campaigning on health and safety issues for members. We were instrumental on working to bring about a change in legislation to help people suffering from bullying or stress at work. Unite has secured funds from the DTI to pursue a project on the effects of bullying at work and what can be done to help the situation. Unite has also campaigned vigorously for legislation regarding Corporate Killing. We are working hard to encourage Government to address the appalling consequences of these issues. We also train and encourage reps to become health and safety specialists in their workplace, offering excellent training, guidance and resources to help them do a vital job.

4. Why choose Unite rather than another union?

People sometimes say, "unions are all the same really." We don't agree with this statement, but of course the choice is yours. You are entitled to want the best deal, and it makes sense to look around and compare what others have to offer before making your choice. Here are some things you might wish to consider.

Effectiveness

You deserve the most effective organisation to support your specific needs. Unite has proved its effectiveness in many excellent deals for individuals and in agreements which have significantly improved working conditions of members. We can call for support from our MPs, members of the House of Lords and members of the European Parliament. Unite has members in both the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and a network of local councillors and people in decision-making and influential positions up and down the land. We employ officers and professionals of the highest calibre so that when we speak for you, we speak with authority, know-how and experience. No other union can rival our ability to help you deal with problems and issues at work.

Democracy and Freedom for Special Interests

It is important that you have a union where no other group is going to dominate you. You need to know that you and your colleagues will be genuinely empowered in a responsive and flexible way, and that the approach that is taken to your employing organisation is both professional and understanding of the special circumstances in which you work. Unite has all these attributes,

and takes pride in the fact that these qualities distinguish us from other organisations.

Distinctiveness for the Community & Non Profit Sector

Employees in Community and Non Profit organisations will be best served by a union which has a real base of influence and authority within the voluntary sector. Unite is undoubtedly that union. Unite's structures and specialist know-how about the Sector are not matched by other organisations.

Value for Money

Unite offers terrific value for money. As a member you are entitled to the legal services of the union – vital protection in the event of a problem at work is yours free of charge providing you have been a member for six months and are not raising a pre-existing issue. Other individual benefits at very reasonable prices specially negotiated for you, include road rescue, home insurance, travel insurance, hospital savings scheme, personal accident, well woman advice, airport car parking, personal motoring service, discounts on electrical goods and mobile phones, unsecured loans, protection for your dependants, planning for retirement, advice on savings and investment, and buying a home.

5. More Information

If you would like further information about Unite in the Community & Non Profit Sector, please call 0207 420 8978 or email nonprofit@unitetheunion.com

Unite - Community and Non Profit Sector

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www.unitetheunion.com/nonprofit



Unite the Union and the Non Profit Sector

**Why joining and working with Unite makes
sense in the Community & Non Profit Sector**

1. What kind of people join Unite?

The short answer to the above question is, "People like you." Unite is a general union for skilled and professional people. Whatever your profession, whatever skill or qualification you hold, there will be others like you who have already joined Unite. The union's members include professional and qualified workers in many different industries and services. Here are a few examples, but if you can't find what you are looking for, don't assume that there isn't someone who does your job, or is working for an organisation that does the same work as yours, already in Unite.

Unite is strongly represented in the Community and Non Profit Sector.

Disabled People's Organisations - we are recognised as "the union" in RADAR, RNIB, Talking Books, Scope, Capability, Remploy, and in several other disability organisations.

Children's Charities Unite is the union for workers in children's charities. For example, in Save The Children Fund, NSPCC, The Children's Society, NCH, ChildLine, the National Child Minding Association, Pre-School Learning Alliance, the National Children's Bureau, the National Foster Care Association and others.

National Bodies In the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), staff have been members of Unite for many years. Other examples are the Housing Corporation, Citizens Advice (the national body for all C.A.B's) and CABs, Victim Support, Relate, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Community Fund, the Consumers' Association, the National Centre for Social Work, the National Consumers' Council and many others.

Health Charities Staff in health related charities like Arthritis Care, the Family Planning Association, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Praxis Mental Health, Rethink, the Richmond Fellowship, Diabetes UK and a number of others, are among others who have joined Unite.

Housing Associations/Social Landlords Unite has many members working for Housing Associations and Social Landlords. Here are some examples; Anchor, Arena, Stonham, Caldmore, Contour, East Midlands, Habinteg, Leicester, Liverpool Housing Trust, Riverside, Mosaic, Peabody... the list could go on.

Education and Awarding Bodies Unite is recognised at the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance, City and Guilds, the Construction Industry Training Board, to mention a few.

Professional Bodies and Unions Unite is recognised for staff who work for the Law Society, the National Association of Head Teachers, the National Association of Teachers/Union of Women Teachers, the National Union of Teachers, the Musicians Union, the GMB, Equity, Nautilus, NATFHE and many more.

Smaller and Locally Based Organisations Many smaller charities and voluntary organisations do not hit the headlines or attract national attention but their staff need a union. They have one in Unite. Staff in women's aid centres, advice centres, councils of voluntary service, and hundreds of smaller projects join Unite.

Legal and Advice Bodies Staff in Citizen's Advice Bureaux, law Centres and Refugees' organisations are members of Unite. The Refugee Legal Advice Centre, local Race Equality Councils and similar bodies are examples of organisations where staff join Unite.

Animal and Environmental Charities People who work for Animal Charities or in Environmental Organisations turn to Unite for support. We have a long-standing agreement with the RSPCA where many staff, including inspectors, vets and workers in animal hospitals are members. Staff in the Whale and Dolphin Society and a number of the Wildlife Trusts are also in membership of Unite, including the National Wildlife Trust, and we have a growing membership in organisations like WWF, Blue Cross Animal Welfare and others.

Arts Organisations Unite is recognised for staff who work for the Arts Council, the British Film Institute, the Film Council, the South Bank Centre, the Liverpool Philharmonic, the Scottish Arts Council, Independent Theatres Council, Leicester Haymarket Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Church and Faith Organisations Unite has members among all the main Christian denominations and a growing membership among Rabbis. We are keen to welcome workers and ministers in all faiths into membership. Our Faith Workers' Section deals with all church denominations on a completely ecumenical basis.

Professional Organisations Unite has members in distinct professional organisations and associations too, like the Association of Professional Tourist Guides and the National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators.

When you join Unite, you are joining a union with wide experience of different kinds of industries, different sorts of agencies, and with the ability to represent every occupation represented in the workforce. This breadth of experience is incredibly helpful in judging what is fair and reasonable, what is good practice, and what is the best way for organisations to conduct their business.

2. How does Unite work?

Our History

Unite evolved historically through a series of mergers with various unions and professional associations. Because of this we have assumed a federal industrial structure which gives autonomy to the various sections of the union. Unite is now the largest union in the United Kingdom, and the largest union dealing with the Private, Public and Community & Non Profit Sectors of employment.

The Community & Non Profit Sector in Unite

The Sector covers all the sorts of organisations listed above. The Sector has its own representative to the National Executive Committee of Unite. Only those working in the Community & Non Profit Sector are eligible to vote or be nominated to stand for election. The NEC member will be responsible for speaking on behalf of Community & Non Profit Sector members when issues of concern to them are raised at the highest level of the union. (No other union has such a structure providing a clear voice at the top table for Community & Non Profit Sector members).

Members in the Community & Non Profit Sector typically belong to "Community Branches" which address the needs of all who work for the Sector in their locality. Community Branches also provide immediate help and support for isolated individual members of the union in the Sector. Large organisations have their own Unite Branches.

A National Industrial Committee for the Community & Non Profit Sector exists to advise the officers and National Executive of Unite on matters in relation to the Community & Non Profit Sector. Forums for members in similar organisations (eg the Arts, Housing Associations etc) are held from time to time. The structure of Unite gives members in each Sector a special "Sector Conference" to maximise democratic engagement, and the Community & Non Profit Sector Conference will enable members in the Sector to have their say on all matters of concern in relation to working in this Sector.

The Structure of Unite at the Workplace

Members of Unite, working for a given employer, decide their policies on employment and human resources issues without pressure or domination by external groups or members in other organisations.

When Unite is “recognised” in Community & Non Profit organisations, there is an autonomous union “group” to represent workers, consult with management in the organisation and deal with individual cases where assistance is required. Recognition establishes a body that management can deal with and it is the union’s job to be as effective as it possibly can be in communicating with all members and potential members.

Recognition of the union makes for better, more systematic communication, fitting into existing meetings structures wherever possible. The union expects to create an effective voice for staff in Community & Non Profit organisations. For example, in many cases there would be an Unite Newsletter for the specific organisation passing information about what is going on in consultation meetings down to individual members.

Representatives at the Workplace

Representatives of Unite members in your workplace and organisation are identified (either by volunteering or by a process of election) and are accountable to their colleagues. In cases where there has been a consultative forum of some kind, those who have been involved in the forum would normally become representatives in the newly established Unite organisation. The difference between a consultative forum representative and a trade union representative is markedly different, since the trade union representative has training, is independent of the organisation, is supported by the resource of the union, and is free to act on the needs of the members, not the organisation. In Community & Non Profit organisations, there needs to be a proper cross-section of staff involved and it would be important to get a spread of geographical location too.

Sometimes individual grievances and disciplinary matters involving individual members are handled by an Unite Regional Officer. However, the general aim is to train sufficient lay representatives to take care of this kind of work. (It is of course recognised that there will always be some situations where a Regional Officer of

the union needs to step in to help, and in any case at the later stages in appeals, members usually look for professional representation from a union Regional Officer, or even our legal services.)

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the union but you are not able or willing to become a representative, you can be a contact and simply pass information about the union, and perhaps recruitment literature, to other colleagues in your workplace. Or you can be a special kind of representative with defined and limited functions. Specialist reps include Learning Representatives, Health and Safety Representatives, Grievance Reps, Equalities Reps, Environmental Champions, Disability Champions. If you would like more information about any of these roles, contact your Regional Office or your Regional Officer of Unite.

Whatever role you undertake, we will offer you training and support if you become a representative. The training is high quality and immensely enjoyable, and it is a good way of getting more knowledge and new skills, whilst at the same time meeting new people and helping to improve the working lives of others.

Support from the Union Locally, Regionally and Nationally

Unite offers its core resources to each workplace or organisation group to support the work they are doing. Training, legal advice and information, research and comparative information on pay and conditions, advice on health and safety matters, on equal opportunities, and in communicating with members and working as a team, are available through the union and its specialist officers.

The emphasis is on empowerment, and sovereignty of membership groups. Whilst Unite recognises that the employer’s concern is always going to be in response to the employees’ needs and perceptions, training, education and provision of relevant information is vital if representatives are to perform their roles adequately. Professional advice and the direct involvement of a Regional Officer of the union is often beneficial, but the objective of Unite is always to encourage informed and skilled members to handle the great majority of case work, consultation and negotiation independently. The emphasis is on self-reliance, but the union provides the support structures to facilitate growth and development of good relations, and assists in problem solving where necessary.

3. How does Unite help you?

Unite seeks to understand the problems of individuals within their employing organisations, and guide them towards solutions based on best practice. The following, whilst not an exhaustive list, is an attempt to set out details of the way in which Unite would work in Non Profit Organisations, and the advantages which recognition of Unite would bring to your organisation.

Resolution of Grievances and Disciplinary Problems

This is the bread and butter work of unions, and Unite has built up a wide experience of dealing with complex and often difficult issues. At the same time as representing members, we often give advice to management as to what we feel is fair and reasonable practice. In this way we can often unlock a log jam of complexity which otherwise might be destructive and expensive to the organisation.

Consulting with Employees Effectively

An effective consultation mechanism with staff and a collective voice to express the views and needs of staff in any given context is important, particularly where change is being sought. Unite encourages its staff representatives to take advantage of training which the union makes available to facilitate an effective consultation process. In this way we enable employers to deal with a responsive group of employees who are (where necessary) able to obtain guidance and independent advice, but whose accountability and authority derives from the members they represent.

Recognition and Collective Bargaining

Under the Information and Consultation Act, all employers, except very small employers, will be required to have in place a

policy for consulting with their staff. We think the best way of doing this is via a recognition agreement with Unite. We have extensive experience of collective bargaining, recognising and working for not only what is best for the employee but also for the organisation and management. We have numerous model employment policies, extensive experience of working with organisations in the Community and Non Profit Sector.

Policy Issues and Support

Membership of Unite gives access to the services and support of a big union with many ways of influencing national policy on a wide range of issues. We do high quality research; we prepare policy papers; we seek to influence decision takers by the logic and cogency of our arguments. Our concern is to speak up for the needs of our members and the organisations they work for, and on which they depend for their livelihoods. In particular, we maintain a close interest in policy relating to the Voluntary and Community & Non Profit Sector. Unite has been represented on many committees and working groups which have contributed to the knowledge and understanding of best practice regarding people issues in the Sector. We are influential in our dealings with MPs, MEPs and Ministers in taking up your issues and working around solutions.