CLACKMANNANSHIRE UNISON AGM 24/25 February 2021

Welfare Officer Annual Report

Hi everyone

My name is Kevin Keane and I was elected last year to the role of Welfare Officer for the Clackmannanshire UNISON Branch.

It has been a very difficult year for all of us in 2020 and so far 2021 has not been any easier. UNISON's charity There For You (UNISON Welfare) are very busy as you can imagine supporting our members who are experiencing financial difficulties - particularly through COVID.

Unfortunately I have not been as active and involved in the role as I would have liked as due to the pandemic I have as yet still to undergo full training for this post. I have also been working from home throughout the pandemic so have not been in the office at all for almost a year now. During the coming year I will be looking to be more active in my role and ensure more communication is circulated to members in respect of the amazing job which Unison’s charity There For You does.

Unison’s charity There for You offers a wide range of support to our members from debt advice and benefit checks to ensure members are in receipt of all the income to which they are entitled, as well as providing direct financial support to members through a number of financial assistance programmes. There for You has as mentioned above also set up a Covid 19 response fund which can help members with Grants of up to £500 in circumstances where members have been adversely financially affected by the pandemic. I have below attached some detail on two of the schemes currently operated by There For You which summarises the support offered by the schemes and the general criteria under which awards are considered.

**COVID-19 response fund**

The COVID-19 response fund reopened on Monday 16 November, offering grants of up to £500 to help members whose household incomes have been affected in any of the following ways:

* You and/or your partner are currently furloughed
* You and/or your partner are currently receiving Statutory Sick Pay and are either shielding, self-isolating or off sick due to other COVID-related reasons
* You and/or your partner have been made redundant or lost your job due to coronavirus
* You and/or your partner’s employer have reduced your working hours, including loss of regular overtime (applicable also where partner is self-employed and loss of earnings can be proven)

Please note that applicants must be a UNISON member with savings of less than £2,500 and have paid at least two months’ subscriptions.

**We want to make this fund go as far as possible and help as many members as we can. Therefore please only apply if you are in financial difficulty as a result of COVID-19.**

Depending on your situation, help will be awarded as follows:

* £350 living costs for applicants who are furloughed or have a salary reduction due to COVID
* £500 loss of employment grant due to redundancy
* Up to £500 housing costs grant – towards rent, mortgage, or council tax arrears that have accrued since March 2020

## Winter fuel grant

There for You Winter has a limited fund to offer grants of up to £200 to UNISON members struggling to pay fuel bills this winter.

Members whose income is less than £18,200 (if living alone) or £26,000 (for a family) can apply. Applications will also be accepted from members in receipt of either housing benefit, Universal Credit or council tax reduction.

Any members who have been impacted financially by the pandemic and meet the outlined criteria for COVID 19 Response Fund or any members on low incomes as outlined above for the Winter Fuel grants and experiencing financial difficulty due to the costs of fuel bills can find out more and apply to these schemes by visiting:

 https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you/financial-assistance/#heading-1

or alternatively by contacting myself at kkeane@clacks.gov.uk or by e-mailing the branch at clacksunison@btconnect.com

I look forward to having a more productive and active role in the coming year and hope we all have a more positive year ahead than the one just past, stay safe.