



Branch Secretary

BRIEFING

FOR BRANCH ACTIVISTS AND MEMBERS

October 2013

[Pay 2014; Daily & Overnight Subsistence Allowances & Mileage Allowances; SNC Seminar; Annual Subsistence Allowance; Domestic Abuse Policy; Wellbeing Survey; Flexible working; Flexible Retirement; Occupational Health; Staff Training & Development](#)

Pay 2014

Each Trade Union has fed into the Trade Union Side their views as to the approach that should be adopted for the 2014 pay claim. The claim has now being written and will be submitted at the next Joint Officers meeting. Dates for the pay negotiations are in the process of being set, with both Sides wanting to conclude these before the end of the year.

Daily & Overnight Subsistence Allowances & Mileage Allowances

Constituent Trade Unions have recently consulted on the revised daily & overnight subsistence allowances, as well as changes to lease car mileage allowances. The outcomes of those consultations were considered at the meeting. The Trade Union Side is now able to accept these subject to some minor amendments to the proposed changes being discussed with the employer. These changes have arisen following HMRC informing UNISON that the existing payments fall outside of its authorised tax free allowances. These will be implemented as soon as practically possible.

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SNC Seminar

Arrangements are being progressed to hold a seminar between both Sides of the Staff Negotiations Committee (SNC). This is due to be held at the end of November, and will focus on looking at the possible future staffing requirements for the next 5 years or so, in the face of the ongoing austerity programme by the government.

The impact of this government's economic programme & its attack on public services has led to increased work for UNISON staff and some loss of members. In the light of this changing shape of UNISON's membership and Branch organisation, it is felt that this is an appropriate point at which to review the anticipated future staffing needs of the union.

The Trade Union Side sees this as an important opportunity for staff's views to be fed into UNISON's thoughts on future staffing arrangements and needs.

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Annual Subsistence Allowance

As reported in the August bulletin, the TU Side had received

revised proposals from management for reviewing this payment. Following lengthy discussions with the employer, and in the TU Side, an agreed outcome of how the Annual Subsistence Allowance is applied has been reached. It will now be necessary to collect the relevant information to implement the agreement and any changes will not now be introduced until the New Year.

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Domestic Abuse Policy

Joint discussions with the employer are being undertaken to develop a domestic abuse policy covering staff. Discussions have so far been productive with the expectation that there should be a draft policy available in the near future.

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Wellbeing Survey

The Trade Union Side and all of its constituent trade unions have been pressing the employer for some time over the need to survey staff to understand the pressures that they are working under and to, therefore, be able to consider ways in which staff can be better supported in the future. A joint well being survey is about to be issued to all staff.

The wording of the survey has been agreed but there has been a slight delay to the timetable for distributing it due to technical issues. A Trade union Side note to constituent Trade Unions will be circulated at the point, in the immediate future, that the survey is launched.

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Flexible working

The review of the flexible working arrangements has been concluded resulting in the existing policy remaining un-amended.

To support a more consistent approach to the implementation of flexible working across the union a set of managers guidance notes have been written and which the Trade Union Side has had the opportunity to comment upon. Additionally, a protocol on the use and operation of home working has been created so as to bring some consistency to how this is being used. The documentation relating to all of this is about to be issued and the Trade Union Side will circulate it via constituent Trade Unions.

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Flexible Retirement

Progress has been made on developing an agreed policy and the draft proposals will now be shared with the Pension Scheme Trustees as the policy will have implications for the Scheme. It is anticipated that the Trustees will need to take advice on how the policy will impact on the Scheme and the Trade Union Side and UNISON will need to consider the Trustees comments before reaching a finalised agreement.

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Occupational Health

UNISON's occupational health provision has ended up being delivered by SERCO following its takeover of the original provider. Steps are being taken to review and revise the occupational health tender specification and there is a desire to try to find a national public sector organisation that can deliver a service across the whole of UNISON. This has proven to be a challenging search so far. The revised specification is still being worked on and once finalised a tender process will follow.

Currently staff's occupational health referrals are not being provided by SERCO but instead as a temporary measure UNISON is using occupational health specialists that are recommended by Thompsons. Staff health checks will continue to be delivered by SERCO until a new provider can be found.

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Staff Training & Development

Regions and Departments have now completed their action plans arising from the USay survey and the outcome of those together with the IIP review will be considered together.

It was clear from the responses received that training and development was of importance to staff and recent changes had resulted in staff feeling that their needs were not being met. This is particularly the case in respect of non organising staff.

A review of staff training is being undertaken with the development of new guidance for the Learning Support Scheme and a new staff training programme being developed.

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