

Support for Man's Club

UNISON in Cadent chose to support a local branch of Andy's Man Club (AMC) with a gift of advent calendars with wellbeing products.

The club meets every Monday at Coombe Hall Conference and Events, Rugby Road, Brandon at 7pm.

Andy's Man Club is a men's suicide prevention charity, offering free-to-attend peer-to-peer support groups across the United Kingdom and online.

It aims to end the stigma surrounding men's mental health and help men through the power of conversation. #ITSOKAYTOTALK



The group facilitator said: "The guys were well chuffed!"

Get involved: branch seeking membership officer

Would you like to do more in UNISON and become the branch's new membership officer?

Do you enjoy getting involved and making a positive change?

No prior experience is necessary, and all training will be provided.

We need you to keep a track of the branch's membership and be a driving force in developing and organising a recruitment strategy.

The role also includes:

- Mapping the branch's membership to identify membership density and steward coverage
- Making sure we have accurate membership records
- Monitoring the branch's recruitment and retention rate
- Working with the branch committee and regional staff to develop and implement the organisation and membership's growth plan
- Making recommendations on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets and so on.

**Merry Christmas
and Happy New
Year to all our
members**

What have unions done for us?

We often take for granted the struggle of many working people, the efforts of union representatives and long and hard negotiation processes that lead us to what we have now guaranteed by laws.

In this third article of our 'What have unions done for us?' series, we would like to give a brief history of how the National Minimum Wage in the UK was achieved.

The minimum wage was first introduced in 1998 after being passed by the Labour government which came into power the year before.

The Labour Party began to build the political case for the minimum wage. It started with the business case – that low pay undermined the ability of companies to compete and that high turnover brought high costs in training and recruitment.

While trade unions were initially unsure of the impact a national minimum wage would have, they later helped to influence Labour on the policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Every modern industrial country has a minimum wage, including the US and Japan. Britain used to have minimum wages through the Wages Councils.

When first introduced, the National Minimum Wage made a significant public impact at the bottom of the income scale – particularly to women, who comprised 70 per cent of the beneficiaries and were not covered by existing collective bargaining agreements.

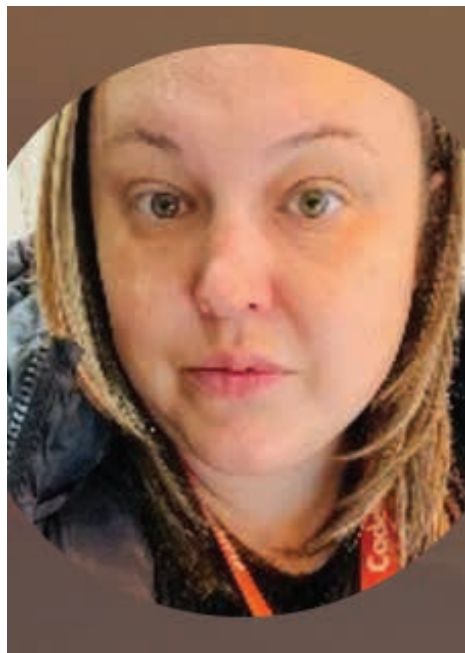
It also affected workers in high turnover service industries such as fast food restaurants, and members of ethnic minorities. There were a million beneficiaries in all.

Minimum hourly rate then and now:

Age	Year	Year	From
	1999/2000	2024/2025	1 April 2025
21 and over	£3.60	£11.44	£12.21
18 to 20	£3.00	£8.60	£10.00
16 to 17	-	£8.60	£7.55
Apprentice	-	£6.40	£7.55

Get to know your UNISON reps

In each edition of this newsletter, we will put one member of the UNISON branch team under the spotlight with a Q & A designed to help members get to know their union representatives. This month's volunteer is Melissa English, the branch chair.



When did you join Cadent?

I joined 18 years ago as a Pertemps temp, it was meant to be a six-week stint during the summer holidays while I was between university courses...

What is your current role, and where are you based?

I am connections team leader looking after theft of gas and MPRN compliance teams.

What is your career history?

I've been within connections for a few years now but the majority of the time I worked in dispatch. I've also worked as a call centre agent and complaints handler.

When did you join UNISON?

Around 10 years ago.

And why?

I joined because I needed help with an issue at work and had to rely on a very kind colleague supporting me. He advised me to join UNISON in case I ever needed assistance again.

Have you called on UNISON for support during your career?

Yes, UNISON has supported me many times with a range of issues, including through a grievance, issues with pay and helping with flexible working requests.

When did you become a rep?

2017 - 2018, from memory.

Why did you become a rep?

I became a rep because I wanted to make sure no one ever felt how I did at one of the worst times I had at work - which was alone and helpless. I genuinely felt like I was being treated unfairly and didn't know where to turn. I didn't want anyone in genuine need to ever feel like that.

What do you think you bring to the role?

I think I am direct and determined.

What is the most rewarding part of being a union rep?

Achieving outcomes for people that wouldn't have happened without union intervention.

And the most challenging?

The perception that you are there to get people out of trouble no matter what. This isn't the case at all, we are there to make sure processes are followed and people are treated fairly.

What do you feel has been your biggest achievement on behalf of members?

The introduction of shift allowance for Cadent S workers which we lobbied for.

What is your current role within the UNISON branch?

Branch chair.

What are your aims within this role?

I am generally the figurehead of the union. I get involved in all collective consultations, re organisations, pay negotiations and policy reviews which doesn't leave a lot of time for branch work too, but I am always happy to engage with members and like to attend drop-in meetings to meet them and hear their views and issues.

Have you held other positions within the branch?

Membership officer.

What would you say to a colleague who is not a member of UNISON in terms of encouraging them to join?

It's worth being a member of a union to ensure that your voice is always heard. I find it reassuring to know that there's always someone in the background working hard to protect and improve my pay and terms and conditions and there's always someone to turn to if I need help. There are also some nice perks as well - I hear the Croyde Bay Holiday Park is a nice affordable UK break available to members if you fancy a trip to the seaside.

How can colleagues find out more about being a rep?

Feel free to contact me, or there's plenty of information on the UNISON website. You are always welcome to attend a branch meeting to see what we talk about and what's on our agenda.

Member benefits

In this, and a series of further articles, we would like to outline the benefits of becoming a UNISON member.

Whether you are already a UNISON member but would like to refresh your knowledge on what membership can do for you, or if you are considering becoming a member but are unsure if it is worth and what you can get in return for your monthly membership fee, this is the right place to start!

Wellbeing. Health plan.

We can get you covered for money back on everyday health expenses such as trips to the dentist and opticians plus a

wide range of therapy treatments like physiotherapy, chiropody and many other cash-paying benefits.

Pre-existing conditions are covered on most benefits and there's no age limit to join or to stay on cover. You can get peace of mind knowing health and dental bills for your family are taken care of with this low-cost plan, plus there's free cover for up to five children too.

A claim can be made by simply paying your bill as normal, then completing a claim form and returning to us with your receipt and you will receive your money back in a few days by cheque or bank transfer. A monthly cover Level 1 plan starts from £12.50.

But first... Join UNISON!