

North Somerset UNISON newsletter

May 2020

Lockdown Special

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Covid-19 work related issues

How UNISON is helping members during the current crisis:

UNISON, nationally, has led the way in negotiating and campaigning for proper protection and support for all workers. Clapping for the NHS and key-workers is much appreciated but most of our members would prefer decent working conditions and pay. The fight for real recognition for the work and needs of public sector employees will continue long after lockdown is finally ended!

What your branch offers:

Your local branch officers and staff have moved to home-working. We have been using lots of the new technology to support our members - Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype and even the good old-fashioned phone! We have been busy providing support around the usual issues of disciplinaries, restructures and grievances.



However, all workers are now dealing with problems at work and at home which we would not have dreamt of a few months ago and sometimes people need union support. The government guidance seems to change on a weekly basis and it has sometimes been difficult to keep up! However, we are backed by an experienced regional team of UNISON officers and Thompsons Solicitors.

Issues we have supported members around include: provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for workers who need this, changes to working hours, problems with working from home, people being furloughed and expectations of when people need to go into the workplace

Contact us at unison@n-somerset.gov.uk if you need our support or advice.

The Help-Hub

The South West UNISON region has set up a help-hub for members' queries and requests for help. The hub is staffed by UNISON officers from 8am until 10pm on weekdays, with emergency cover over the weekends.



To contact the Help Hub visit southwest.unison.org.uk or email

UNISON@help-hub.co.uk

UNISON's There for You Welfare fund is available for any members who need financial support. There is now a special Covid-19 grant of up to £250 to help with food and bills if your income has reduced due to the current crisis. Check if you are eligible by visiting [the There for You section on the UNISON website](#) or email thereforyou@unison.co.uk.

Uncertain about when and how you will be returning to work?

The government's recent announcements on the proposed easing of lockdown have left many of us confused to say the least! If things are changing with your work situation and you need some support don't forget that your union is there to help you.

Employers must carry out a workplace risk assessment under the Health and Safety at Work Regulations Act 1974 and they must take any actions which are identified by this to keep their employees safe. If you are concerned that your workplace will not be a safe place for you to work, email us or, if urgent and we are not around, contact the Help Hub (details above)

Some ideas for coping with lockdown

We know that many of you are working as hard as ever keeping our community going and protecting our most vulnerable residents. However, others of us are working from home (or trying to!) and some are furloughed. Whatever, your circumstances, these are difficult times, so we thought we'd share some ideas we have had for making these more enjoyable. If you have any tips you would like to share, we would love to hear from you!

Recipes:

Being stuck at home is a good time to experiment in the kitchen! Here are a couple of recipes we have enjoyed and thought we would share with you!

Feta Salad with crusty bread – Serves 4

We might not be able to get to the Med or Adriatic at the moment but why not try this simple adaptation of a Greek salad and dressing?:

For the salad:

- Mixed green salad either bagged or made up from what's to hand ie iceberg, baby spinach, rocket, etc.
- One block of Feta cheese (200g) cut into cubes
- Tomatoes (cherry or large, cut in half or sliced)
- Small red onion thinly sliced
- One avocado cut into small cubes
- Handful of walnut halves, cut in half
- About a third of a cucumber cut into small chunks
- Green and black olives (jar or fresh) – about 12 per serving

(Adjust quantities according to taste)

Start by making a bed of green salad on each plate building up with the other ingredients and finishing with the olives.

For the dressing:

- 25 basil leaves (washed)
 - 1 garlic clove
 - 50ml olive oil
 - 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1. Using a pestle and mortar (or bowl and end of rolling pin) crush the basil leaves with the garlic and a pinch of rock salt (I chop my basil and garlic first)
 2. Stir in olive oil and balsamic vinegar
 3. Drizzle over salad

Serve with crusty French bread (fresh or long life part baked baguettes)

Goes well with a glass of wine!

Got a sweet tooth?

No Cook Coconut Ice

- 250g sweetened condensed milk
 - 250g icing sugar plus extra for dusting
 - 200g desiccated coconut
 - Pink food colouring (optional)
1. Mix condensed milk and icing sugar in a large bowl until well combined. It will become very stiff, use hands if necessary.
 2. Split the mix in half and add a small amount of pink colouring to one half.
 3. Dust a board with icing sugar before shaping each half into a rectangle. Place one half into a baking tray and then place the second half on top and roll with a rolling pin, reshaping with your hands until the mix is about one inch thick.
 4. Allow to chill and set for at least 3 hours or overnight. Cut into squares and store in a container or jar. **If you can keep it that long!**



Some tips to keep busy

Lockdown is affecting us all differently. Some of you will be working extra hours whereas others may be furloughed. If you have time on your hands you might like to consider trying some of the following activities:

Free Training - Log on to on-line training at [My UNISON](#) The following courses are available free of charge to all members:

- Staying Strong, stress awareness

- Maths
- The Care Certificate
- Your Skills, your future

If you have problems logging on let us know at unison@n-somerset.gov.uk

Exercise – Fancy trying a new workout? There is a wealth of free on line facilities on You Tube such as ballet for beginners from the Royal Academy of Dance.

Helping others - If you would like to volunteer to make a difference to those members of our community who are isolated at this time, there is lots you can do. You could carry out tasks such as shopping, collecting medication or simply having a chat on the phone.

To register as a volunteer or find out more go to vansweb.org.uk or telephone 01934 416486.

Entertainment



Photo by [Kyle Head](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Organisations such as the National Theatre and Royal Opera House are streaming live productions, free of charge, during the pandemic. If you enjoy live productions or if you have never watched a full-length opera, ballet or play before this is an opportunity for you to check them out free of charge on You tube. Go to <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/nt-at-home> or <https://www.roh.org.uk/streaming> to find out what's available or simply Google National Theatre or Royal Opera House live streaming.



Photo by [Nathan Ansell](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Books - Avid readers might like to check out an online book club on the web such as OnlineBookClub.org or join [North Somerset Library](#), if you're not already a member, and access a range of e-books, newspapers and magazines online as well as the Ancestry Website and Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Helping to reduce our environmental impact

We know that many members are interested in trying to make changes to help keep the planet safe for future generations. Every individual can make a difference, no matter how small. One positive outcome from the Covid19 situation is that there are far less planes and cars polluting our planet and this is making a big difference to our wild life. Even from home, there are things we can all do to start to help.



Photo by [Evie S.](#) on [Unsplash](#)

You may be surprised to know that the average UK household wastes **£470** worth of food each year. Roughly **250,000 tonnes** of food are wasted unnecessarily equating to **650 million** meals!

If you would like to cut down on your food waste try the following tips:

- Revive wilted vegetables and salads by finely trimming the ends off and dunking the ends of the remaining vegetable into a bowl of ice cold water to rehydrate.
- Freeze over-ripe bananas to use in banana bread later on.
- Grate hard cheese before it goes mouldy and freeze to use in sauces later on.
- The average fridge temperature is 7 degrees. Reducing this to 5 or 6 degrees will increase the life of most foods by a couple of days.

Keeping in touch with UNISON

Given the changing times of the last couple of months the importance of keeping in touch has taken on a new relevance for us all. To ensure you get the full benefit of your membership with UNISON it is important that your membership details are kept fully up to date to enable us to quickly communicate information relevant to you in your field of work. You are able to check and update your membership details yourself using this link <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/>

Alternatively, you can email or ring the branch to update your address, place of work and any other details we need to know.

unison@n-somerset.gov.uk (tel: 01934 634759)

Do we have your email address?

The ability to communicate with those members for whom we hold email addresses has been invaluable in recent times, ensuring that there are no delays in passing on important information and updates received on Government guidance, furloughing, and other issues.

If we don't have your current email address please let us have it and we will ensure that you are kept informed of important developments.

Social Media

To keep an eye of what we are doing and latest union campaigns, nationally and regionally why not follow us on Facebook and Twitter? It is also worth keeping a regular eye on our website.



<https://www.facebook.com/nsunison>



@nsunison



www.northsomersetunion.co.uk

