

The Phil Wood Learning Grant Scheme for UNISON  
low paid women members and activists

**Funding for our Future:**  
a new learning grant scheme  
for UNISON South East low paid  
women members and activists



UNISON is a union of women, over 1 million of them working across the public and private sectors delivering quality public services. Our women members are in all professions, catering assistants, nurses, midday supervisors, librarians, cleaners, social workers and cooks amongst a wide variety of jobs. A large proportion of our women members are low paid and UNISON is unique in offering opportunities for our low paid women members to participate in their union, with reserved seats at conferences and on committees. UNISON recognises there can be a number of barriers to participating in our democracy at branch, regional and national level; time off from work, caring responsibilities and in too many cases a lack of opportunity to complete education or go into higher education.

As a trade union we can negotiate time off to participate in our democracy and we have long standing provisions in place to either provide child care or pay for child / dependent care for those with caring responsibilities.

So I am very proud that UNISON South East is now introducing this Education Bursary for Women, a specific opportunity for our low paid women members and activists to return to education. So many of our women members have benefited from the training opportunities that UNISON offers; this bursary goes one step further and provides exclusive opportunities for low paid women members.

This opportunity is provided by former Regional Secretary, Phil Wood who retired in 2015. Phil was adamant that these opportunities should be offered to low paid women only in the South Region and UNISON South East is very proud of this initiative.

I would encourage you to consider what this opportunity can do for you in your job and in also in your trade union. The opportunity to return to education that you may have left at 16, the college course you may not have had the time to complete, the opportunity to gain that qualification you always wanted, go for that promotion at work or become more active in UNISON.

Best wishes in whichever opportunities to choose to take.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maggi Ferncombe'.

**Maggi Ferncombe**  
Regional Secretary  
UNISON South East



## **Funding for our Future:** a new learning grant scheme for UNISON South East low paid women members and activists

Women make up 76% of UNISONs membership, which is not surprising given that women make up over two thirds of workers delivering public services. Yet a disproportionate number of women across the public sector are in low-paid, part-time, undervalued work. Women have traditionally been discriminated in society and at work and this can often lead to exclusion from employment and educational opportunities.

Like many organisations, UNISON reflects society and we recognise that women, particularly low-paid or part-time women workers have traditionally faced barriers when accessing training opportunities and participating in their union. UNISON's commitment to structures which represent our diverse membership are reflected in our rules, policies and procedures, but despite this, women remain underrepresented in UNISON's structures at all levels.

One way that UNISON addresses this situation is by providing access to training for members and activists. This helps to improve members' confidence, skills, provides opportunities to enhance their careers, and importantly for UNISON it helps us to grow and build a strong organised union. You will find further information about the many courses we provide for members and activists by visiting the South East website - [click here](#)

UNISON's low-paid or part-time women members across the South East wishing to take up study at their own expense can now access a new 'Education Bursary for Women' which is a new scheme designed to help with the financial cost of studying. Under this new scheme there are two grants available:

### **The Learning Grant**

Provides support to women members with little or no formal qualifications which will help towards the costs associated with returning to education or skill based courses. This could include Maths, English, IT courses, GCSEs or A Level courses undertaken at a Further Education College or the Open University. This grant is available for courses external to UNISON the grant is for up to £150 per year, and for a maximum of three years.

### **The Activist Grant**

Provides support to women activists undertaking Trade Union or labour movement studies. This could include a diploma or degree level course at a recognised university (including the Open University). The grant is for the amount of up to £1,000 per year and for a maximum of three years.

# Funding for our Future:

## a new learning grant scheme for UNISON South East low paid women members and activists

### Criteria for Applications

- The grants are open to UNISON South East women members whose hourly pay rate equates to or is less than £10 per hour (this is currently UNISON's claim for the Living Wage rate).
- The grants are offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Ten Learning Grants and five Activists Grants will be awarded in each academic / calendar year. Funding becomes available at two points in the year: 1 January and 1 September.
- Grants can be used to support the costs associated with study. For example, course fees or travel costs, the purchase of books or resources for any of the types of learning mentioned above.
- Grants are not available for qualifications linked to 'Licence to Practice' or learning that is generally intended to meet an employer's statutory and/or legal responsibilities (e.g. health and safety).
- Applications will be considered upon receipt of a copy of your course registration and proof that you are meeting the full cost of fees (i.e. you are not receiving assistance with fees from any other sponsor) before a grant can be paid.
- Applicants must have been a member of UNISON for at least 4 weeks prior to applying, have no arrears of subscriptions, and continue to pay the correct membership subscription during the time you are supported by a grant and/or for one year after receiving the grant.
- A member can receive no more than one UNISON learning grant in each academic / calendar year, and can receive a maximum of three grants for the Learning Grant, or a maximum of three grants for the Activist Grant. A member will not be eligible for a regional grant if they are already in receipt of, or applying for, a UNISON national bursary award.
- All grants will be awarded at the discretion of the South East Region Grants Award Board.



## SECTION ONE – Applicant to complete

Please tell us what other costs are involved e.g. travel, books £

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Please complete the BACS form below so that if your application is agreed we can place the money into your account – we will inform you that we are doing this.

**Member:** You should save this document once you have completed Section 1 and Section 2 and return it by email to [f.roberts@unison.co.uk](mailto:f.roberts@unison.co.uk) or by post to Fiona Roberts, Regional Women's Officer, UNISON South East, 179 Preston Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6AG. If you require another method of payment then please inform us and we can discuss alternative arrangements with you directly.

Member's signature

.....

Date

.....

## SECTION TWO – For payment by BACS

The Union's preferred method for paying bursaries is to transfer money direct to members' bank accounts by BACS. This avoids the risk of cheques being lost or delayed.

Payments are processed on a weekly basis and members will be sent a remittance advice, showing details of payments. This will be sent by email where possible to keep costs down.

So that we can process payments to you by BACS, please complete the form below and return it with your application form to UNISON South East, 179 Preston Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6AG.

### YOUR BANK DETAILS:

Your Name (please print)

.....

Your UNISON membership number

.....

E-mail address

.....

Address

.....

.....

Postcode

.....

### Please credit UNISON payments to my bank/building society:

Bank/building society name

.....

Sort code

□	□	□	□	□
---	---	---	---	---

Account number

□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
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Bank/building society reference (if applicable)

.....

Signed

.....

Date

.....



## PROTOCOL – South East Region Grants Award Board

### **Funding for our Future:** Education Bursary for UNISON South East women members and activists

Funding for UNISON South East women member and activist learning grants will be financed from the UNISON South East office account, (formerly known as the SEEDA account). Monies in this account have been bequeathed by **Phil Wood**, UNISON South East Regional Secretary from 1983 to 2015. The sum available at the time of Phil Wood's retirement was £35,000. The Criteria agreed for allocation of grant monies should enable the learning funds to be sustainable for at least five years.

This money is to be used solely for the provision of learning grants to UNISON low-paid women members. Phil Woods's intention in bequeathing this money is that these learning grants will assist low-paid women members' access to education to enhance their lives and their contribution to the trade union movement.

The Grants Award Board will be made up of the South East Region's: Regional Secretary, Regional Women's Officer, Regional Education Organiser, Regional Manager (with responsibility for Equality) and a Regional Convenor / Deputy Convenor (must be female).

Three Board members will form a quorum with the authority to make decisions and award grants (must include the female Convenor/Deputy Convenor).

The role of the Board is to allocate grants fairly and in accordance with the Criteria for Applications. The Board will have discretion in the following areas:

1. To exceed the quota of member or activist learning grants awarded in any one year so long as this decision will not impact on the minimum five year duration of the scheme.
2. To award an individual up to one extra grant beyond the stated maximum on a case-by-case basis.



“A lot has been done but there is still a lot to do” is a well used phrase but a good description of the progress in women participating in the Union. It is not enough that a higher proportion of meetings are attended by women we need to look forward to women changing the culture of the Union so that it looks like an organisation meeting the needs of women at work.

I hope that this fund might remove some barriers to the education which will help more women to realise the changes they can bring about at work and in their union.

Phil Wood  
Regional Secretary (1983–2015)



**Proud  
to be in  
UNISON**



For further information  
please contact

UNISON South East  
179 Preston Road  
Brighton  
East Sussex BN1 6AG