Legal help

A members' guide to UNISON legal services

2017

UNISON
the public service union

This guide is designed to tell you about the legal services you and your family may be entitled to and how to access them.

Contents

The UNISON legal service 2
Legal services at a glance 3
Access to legal services 5
Eligibility 7
The process 9

The UNISON legal service

In UNISON, we recognise that good quality legal services are one of the key reasons our members join a union.

You want legal support and high quality services available when you need them. And of course, you also want the reassurance of knowing that your union is tackling the big legal issues that affect all our members.

Our legal service includes our employment rights team which handles the union's employment law issues.

Our team of in-house employment lawyers will concentrate on the legal issues which affect large numbers of our members. Where it is necessary to take claims to the employment tribunal this will be usually be done by our approved lawyers, Thompsons.

Our legal services team also deal with the wider range of legal services available to individual members and their families outlined in the quick guide on page 4.

Legal services at a glance

Our specialist legal service provider is Thompsons Solicitors, who have worked alongside the trade union movement for over 80 years. Under our arrangements with Thompsons, our branches have access (via their regional office) to local, high-quality employment, personal injury and criminal law advice. We closely monitor the quality of their work and we have agreed standards of service in place.

Thompsons Solicitors have represented members referred to them by UNISON for many years. In consideration of this, and their commitment to the trade union movement as a whole, Thompsons provides branch training and legal surgeries, legal advice and sponsorship of some union events and activities to help UNISON grow and develop our legal services.

You can find more information about Thompsons on their website: **thompsons.law.co.uk**

The table below is a brief guide to the legal services you as a member and in some cases your families† may be entitled to.

	Members	Members' families
Employment advice	✔ **Free**	✘
Personal Injury advice following an accident/injury:		
(i) Accidents at work including industrial and work-related diseases	✔ **Free**	✘
(ii) Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) work-related injury due to a crime of violence	✔ **Free**	✘
(iii) Accidents outside work including road traffic accidents and holiday accidents+	✔ **Free**	✔ **Free**
Criminal law advice defending work related criminal charges	✔ **Free***	✘
Wills standard wills service	✔ **Free**** Incl' joint will	✔ Special rates
Conveyancing	✔ Special rates	✔ Special rates
Free initial legal advice e on any non work issue up to 30 minutes advice°	✔ **Free**	✘
Clinical negligence	✔ **Free*****	✔ **Free****

UNISON's legal assistance is provided in accordance with the Union's rules and the conditions of the Union's legal scheme. A qualifying period and exclusions apply.

†Family is defined as a relative including partners, in-laws and step-relatives.

+Accidents outside the UK are covered where the case can be pursued in the UK courts.

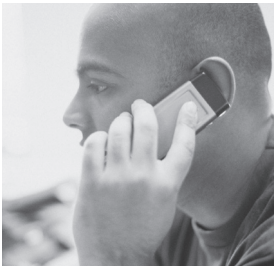
°This issue must relate to you personally and not a family member. The scheme does not cover general financial advice.

* Where available we expect our lawyers to obtain state funding. The funding of legal aid contributions thereafter is discretionary.

** Free initial basic wills for members (and their partners if drawing up a mirror will). A low cost service is available to members and their families for complex wills.

*** Free initial advice, special rates thereafter.

For further details on these services please see our guide *Legal Services – a branch guide to what we offer*.



Access to legal services

Employment

If you want employment advice, you should contact your branch. The branch may refer the matter to your regional office, who will deal with it or refer it to UNISON's lawyers if appropriate.

Please note that members or branches must not instruct lawyers direct as UNISON will not pay any costs incurred.

The simplest way to access most other services is by contacting:

UNISONdirect
Telephone 0800 0 857 857
Textphone 0800 0 967 968

Lines open 6am to midnight – Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm – Saturdays

It would be useful to have your UNISON membership number available when calling.

Criminal law

Contact UNISONdirect or outside their hours in an emergency the UNISON 24 hour criminal helpline on 0800 587 7530.

Eligibility

To qualify for legal help you will have to show that:

- you were a member for the qualifying period before the incident or occurence that led to you seeking help from UNISON
- your subscriptions are up to date
- you continue to pay subscriptions while the case is ongoing.

Special rules apply to industrial disease cases (see our guide *Legal services – a branch guide to what we offer* for details or contact your branch representative for more information).

Legal support will be given as long as the case has reasonable prospects of success as determined by the union or it's approved lawyers.

Please note advice and/or representation is at the absolute discretion of UNISON.

We may withdraw legal support if you do not follow legal advice given or fail to co-operate with our lawyers by responding to letters or phone calls.

The process

What happens after you contact UNISON?

Employment claims

Your branch secretary will discuss with you the next steps and may refer the matter to the regional office if necessary.

UNISONdirect

UNISONdirect will check your membership details and then transfer your case to our lawyers for action.

Please note that our lawyers will inform your branch that they have received the case. In ongoing cases the branch will check your membership details regularly and will notify legal services if the requirements for legal assistance are no longer met.

Criminal helpline outside UNISONdirect hours and in an emergency

An operator will take the details of your case and will pass them on to one of our criminal lawyers for appropriate action.

Join us

Three simple ways to join UNISON today and get essential cover wherever you work

Join online at
joinunison.org

Call us free on
0800 171 2193

Ask your UNISON rep
for an application form

Contact us

For more information visit our website at **unison.org.uk**
or call
0800 0 857 857 (voice)
0800 0 967 968 (textphone)

Lines open from 6am to midnight, Monday to Friday and
9am to 4pm Saturday

UNISON
the public service union

Designed and produced by UNISON Communications. unison.org.uk
Printed and published by UNISON, UNISON Centre,130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY
CU/JANUARY 2017/24162/2595/UNP 14531.