

# Grapevine



The Official Newsletter of *Angus Council Branch*

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## Branch Chair Retires After 39 Years LG Service



The 24th of October 2002 marked the 60th birthday and retirement of our current Branch Chair and Welfare Officer, Allan Fegen, from his post of electrical clerk of works with Angus Council's Property Services. His career began in 1963 when he joined Dundee Corporation. In 1975 he moved to Dundee District Council for a couple of years before taking up a post in Tayside Regional Council in 1977. There he stayed until another reorganisation in 1995 when he joined Angus Council.

It was at that time, Allan became the Branch Welfare Officer. A few years later, due to the untimely death of the then Branch Chair, Jonathan Ogilvie, Allan reluctantly took on that post also. Since then he has carried out his duties admirably and can only be commended for his work within the branch.

Allan has reassured us that he will not be at a loose end as he has a mountain of housework to keep him occupied including getting to grips with ironing, the vacuum cleaner and all of those electrical jobs that he has put off for the past 10 years. He also has interests in caravanning, amateur radio and the Kirriemuir Scout Group. Allan has kindly agreed to carry on with the UNISON roles of Branch Chair and Welfare officer until the AGM, or before if anyone wishes to take on either, or both, of these positions. Allan would be more than happy to help any new recruit to get started in either of these roles. Finally we all wish Allan a happy and long retirement.

## AGM : DATE & VENUE SET

**27th February 2003  
FORFAR ACADEMY**

Finger Buffet from 5:30pm  
APF meeting start 5:45pm  
AGM start 6:15pm

Mark your diary NOW

27th February, Forfar Academy is the date and venue of the next Annual General Meeting of YOUR Unison Branch. Note this down, organise the babysitter and help YOURSELF by attending. All members are entitled to attend and vote and we need around 70 members present before any decisions can be made and ratified,

known as being in quorate. If the meeting is not in quorate then all we can do is talk, a state which the AGM has been in since 2000, so please attend. A finger buffet is available from 5:30. A meeting of the APF members shall take place at 5:45. Anyone who is an APF member or who is interested in the UNISON Labour Link is welcome.

Remember to use the FREEPOST address for any written correspondence

Unison - Angus Council Branch, FREEPOST SC07380, FORFAR, DD8 1ZR

# Health & Safety FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS NO. 1 – EYE TESTS

This is the first in our series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's). These will try to concentrate on the issues that safety reps are regularly asked about.

## Am I entitled to an eyesight test if I work on a VDU?

The regulations that cover VDU work are the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. Display Screen Equipment is now commonly referred to as **DSE**.

Firstly, the regulations talk about **users**. A person should be classified as a **user** if all or most of the following apply:

- a) the job cannot be done effectively or at all without DSE
- b) the worker has no discretion over whether to use DSE
- c) the job requires significant training or particular skills
- d) the worker uses DSE for an hour or more at a time, more or less on a daily basis
- e) the task depends on the fast transfer of information between the user and screen
- f) attention and concentration demands are high, such as where there may be critical consequences of an error

**Normal** and **special** corrective appliances are also mentioned. This simply applies to spectacles or lenses that a user would **normally** wear as opposed to any that would be **special** required for use with DSE.

Anti-glare screens, and so-called "VDU spectacles" and other devices that purport to protect against radiation, are not special corrective appliances.

## Eye and eyesight test

Regulations require employers to provide users who so request it with an appropriate eye and eyesight test. In Great Britain an "appropriate eye and eyesight test" means a "sight test" as defined in the Opticians Act legislation. The test includes a test of vision and an examination of the eye. For the purpose of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations, the test should take account of the nature of the users' work, including the distance at which the screen is viewed. Display screen users are not obliged to have such tests performed but where they choose to exercise their entitlement, employers should offer an examination by a registered ophthalmic optician, or a registered medical practitioner with suitable qualifications ("optometrist" and "doctor" respectively). (All registered medical practitioners, including those in company occupational health departments, are entitled to carry out sight tests but normally only those with an ophthalmic qualification do

so).

Regulation 5 covers the employer's responsibility for providing eyesight tests and states:

- (1) Where a person -
  - (a) is already a user on the date of coming into force of these regulations; or
  - (b) is an employee who does not habitually use display screen equipment as a significant part of his normal work but is to become a user in his current employment,
 his employer shall ensure that he is provided at his request with an appropriate eye and eyesight test.
- (2) Any eye and eyesight test provided shall -
  - (a) be carried out as soon as practicable after being requested by the user concerned; and
  - (b) be carried out before the employee concerned becomes a user.
- (3) At regular intervals after an employee has been provided with an eye and eyesight test his employer shall ensure that he is provided with a further eye and eyesight test of an appropriate nature.
- (4) Where a user experiences visual difficulties which may reasonably be considered to be caused by work on display screen equipment, his employer shall ensure that he is provided at his request with an appropriate eye and eyesight test.
- (5) Every employer shall ensure that each user employed by him is provided with special corrective appliances appropriate for the work being done by the user concerned where -
  - (a) Normal corrective appliances cannot be used; and
  - (b) The result of any eye and eyesight test which the user has been given in accordance with this regulation shows such provision to be necessary.
- (6) Nothing in paragraph (3) shall require an employer to provide any employee with an eye and eyesight test against that employee's will.

There is no reliable evidence that work with display screen equipment causes any permanent damage to eyes or eyesight, but it may make users with pre-existing vision defects more aware of them. This may give some users temporary visual fatigue or headaches. Uncorrected vision defects can make work at display

*(Continued on page 3)*

You can Telephone or Fax the Office

01307 468950

(Continued from page 2)

screens more tiring or stressful than it should be, and correcting defects can improve comfort, job satisfaction and performance.

### Employers' liability for costs

The provision of eye and eyesight tests and of special corrective appliances under the Regulations is at the expense of the USER'S EMPLOYER. This is the case even if the user works on other employers' workstations. Employers are free to specify that users' tests and correction are provided by a particular company or professional. "Normal" corrective appliances are at the user's own expense.

Users needing special corrective appliances may be prescribed a special pair of spectacles for display screen work. Employers' liability for costs is restricted to payment of the cost of a basic appliance, i.e. of a type and quality adequate for its function. If users wish to choose more costly appliances (e.g. with designer frames; or lenses with optional treatments not necessary for the work), the employer is not obliged to pay for these. In these circumstances employers may either provide a basic appliance as above, or may opt to

contribute a portion of the total cost of a luxury appliance equal to the cost of a basic appliance.

If users are permitted by their employers to choose spectacles to correct eye or vision defects for purposes which include display screen work but go wider than that, employers need contribute only the costs attributable to the requirements of the display screen work involved.

There is a free leaflet available from HSE Books (Tel: 01787 881165 )

This information has been taken from Display screen equipment work: guidance on regulations: Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, ISBN 0717604101, £5.75.

Further information on this and other subjects can be found on the HSE website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

**Louise Trayner**

**Branch Health & Safety Officer**

## APF Report WHAT IS UNISON Affiliated Political Fund (APF)

Some of you will already be APF members and know all about it, but since Angus Council Unison Branch now has an APF officer again it may be of interest for some of you to learn more about the UNISON Labour Link.

UNISON is unique among unions in having two sections of its Political Fund. The Affiliated Political Fund (APF) is linked to the Labour Party and the General Political Fund (GPF) is independent of any political party.

UNISON - Labour Link is the popular name of the Affiliated Political Fund (APF). The APF works for UNISON members through our relationship with the Labour Party. The APF section of UNISON is affiliated to the Labour party, both nationally and locally, and through this link we speak for the 670,000 UNISON members who pay the affiliated fund contribution as part of their membership subscriptions.

UNISON APF members can take part in branch APF activities and meetings to discuss matters relating to the Labour Party and to make their contribution to developing policy. APF members are able to vote in Labour Party ballots such as those for the leadership team and the manifesto.

The APF works closely with the 80 strong UNISON group of Labour MP's in Parliament and members of the

House of Lords. There are regular meetings and briefings on issues that are important to UNISON members. There are UNISON linked groups in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. We also liaise with a group of Labour members of the European Parliament (MEPs) so that your views are heard in Europe as well as Westminster.

Among the key issues that UNISON APF is promoting are for improvements to the statutory minimum wage, increased funding for local government and education, fair pay for public service workers etc.

The Labour Party is the only party where trade unions can take part in policy making and are represented at all levels of the organisation as a valued stakeholder. This link with Labour keeps the party in touch with the views of working people and the needs of the public services.

If YOU are interested in particular policy issues or the political debate about decisions affecting you and your working conditions please don't hesitate and contact Petra McFatridge, the APF Officer in Angus UNISON Branch for further information on APF by phone 01307 467525 or e-mail [petra@fergusonandwill.com](mailto:petra@fergusonandwill.com) or visit the UNISON website and read the next issue of the GRAPEVINE.

**Petra McFatridge—Branch APF Officer**

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**Unison - Angus Council Branch, FREEPOST SC07380, FORFAR, DD8 1ZR**

# Snippets



## Branch Email Address Change

Please note that the email address for the Branch Office has changed temporarily to:

***unison-angus@tiscali.co.uk***

## Fuel Allowances

Discussions are still taking place between UNISON and Angus Council regarding the level of payment for both private and lease car fuel allowances. There shall hopefully something to report at the AGM.

## Save Money This Christmas

The Branch are currently the holders of a bundle of leaflets for a Christmas shopping bonanza in Dundee City Centre. The leaflet offers discounts at many city centre shops ranging from 10% - 30% for 1 night only—Thursday 28th November 2002, from 5:30pm. They also double up as entries to a free prize draw worth over £1000. If you wish a leaflet please contact the Branch Office. They will be distributed on a first-come first-served basis and are limited to a maximum of 2 per person.

## Are You Due To Retire?

If you are about to retire then please contact the Branch Office as soon as possible. The Branch have a policy of paying the one-off subscription for the retired members section for any member who is retiring, however **we need to know!**

## Nominations for 2003

Christmas is only a few weeks away and 2003 is just around the corner. This year remember your local Unison Steward, Health & Safety Rep and Branch Officers by re-nominating them for 2003. Why not give that special someone in your workplace the perfect Christmas gift.....re-nomination. You will find the required form on the AGM calling notice which accompanies this issue of The Grapevine.

## UNISON Direct Number Change

The telephone number for UNISON Direct has changed to:

**0845 355 0845**

however members are reminded that if they have a query then they are recommended to contact your local steward or the Branch Office in the first instance.

## New Starts In The Branch

At the last Branch Executive meeting, held on Wednesday 30 October, Alan Cowan was elected as Education Officer. George Martin of the Social Work Department, was also ratified as a Steward for the Gables, Forfar.

# MORE CONTACTS WANTED NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

We have recruited 5 new workplace contacts since the last newsletter. They are:

- Kath Falconer—Seaview Nursery, Monifieth
- Fiona Crossan—Invertay House, Monifieth
- Elaine Arthur—Social Work, Dundee Street, Carnoustie
- Dave Sim—Social Work, County Buildings, Forfar
- Louise Bruce—Leisure Services, LSS, Forfar

you wished to become a Workplace Rep or Health & Safety Rep, etc. If you are willing to help then please complete the slip and send it to the Branch Office using Freepost

✂

**Workplace Contact**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Workplace Address:**  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Phone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

This is a great start to our branch workplace contact network, however there are still a great number of workplaces that have no representation or contacts. I can only ask again for members to help themselves and their fellow colleagues by offering to be a contact. The workplace contact only has to aid with the distribution of local Branch literature as and when they receive it. There are NO meetings to attend apart from the AGM and you would not be asked to carry out any other UNISON duties unless

## Newsletter Articles

If you have any newsletter articles or any suggestions for items which you wish to be considered for inclusion in The Grapevine Newsletter then please contact Bob Bruce by email : [brucera@lineone.net](mailto:brucera@lineone.net) or phone 01307 473738.

The next newsletter shall be distributed early February 2003 before the AGM along with the AGM Agenda and any additional papers.

## Health Club Competition Winner

At the Branch Executive Meeting in September, Louise Trayner, Branch Health & Safety Officer drew the winner for the day for 2 at the Liz McColgan Health Club. Sinead Gillard, a Valuer with the Tayside Valuation Joint Board at Yeaman Shore in Dundee was the lucky winner. We shall attempt to get a report of her day at the club for the next newsletter.



Liz McColgan Health Club

## Website In The Pipeline

In a further attempt to get information to our members the Branch are to create a website. The project is currently in its infancy and will hopefully be on-line by Christmas, if not sooner.

Check out:  
[www.unison-angus.org.uk](http://www.unison-angus.org.uk)  
 nearer the end of the year.

## You can Email the Office

**unison-angus@tiscali.co.uk**