
TUC Unemployed Workers Centres

Hands Up for TUC Unemployed Workers Centres



(Ford Sewing Machinists, 1968. TUC Library Collection)

What are TUC Unemployed Workers Centres?

The TUC Unemployed Workers' Centres have been in existence for 30 years. They were a response by the trade union movement to the growing level of unemployment in the late 1970s. It is a tribute to their resilience, skill, hard work, and effective grassroots support that Centres have survived and are again proving a necessity in this current turbulent period.

The diversity of funding, the range of skills available and Centres responding uniquely to local situations has meant that the Centres have not developed in a uniform manner. A centre being able to respond to local needs has been the network's great strength and relevance, but this diversity has also meant that the potential for a greater profile has not, until now, been possible.

The number of Centres now stands at thirty four. At their peak there were well over two hundred. Many have had to close, through no fault of their own, because of the difficulties in obtaining permanent funding.

UWCs are unique

The Centres' great strength is their uniqueness. There is no other credible trade union based network that gives a voice to the concerns and aspirations of the unemployed, underemployed and unwaged; that not only gives

advice, support and representation, but organises around the issues that confront the people who come through the centres' doors for help. Centre staff and volunteers come from and work in their communities and are non-sectarian. Centres have formed many links and partnerships in the regions and localities. Some are at the forefront of community social and economic development strategies. Most importantly it is the links with Trade Unions and Trade Union Councils which defines the unique role of the UWCs.

The reasons why the Centres were set up have not gone away. The fight for full employment, against poverty and for social justice is as important today as it was in the 1980s. Job insecurity remains a key feature of the modern world of work. Unemployment remains a trade union issue, affecting people whether they are in work or not. Unemployment is still the greatest cause of poverty and permeates through all aspects of our communities. Centres may have different approaches to the situations that face them but the struggle to tackle these matters is still the common strand that unites us.

At a local level Centres have proved to be effective lobbying and campaigning bodies but more needs to be done to use the centres resources and share the skills and expertise within its

network, and to develop the network. The massive reserve of expertise, resources, knowledge, skills and people that exists within the Centres is best placed to seize the opportunities now available. These skills and resources need to be exploited to their full potential by trade unions at national as well as local level. Centres have yet to properly exploit the channels available for influence and dialogue.

What do Centres do?

The services offered in each Centre vary according to the resources available but in general they campaign for full employment, proper and safe working conditions, against attacks on benefits and strong trade unions.

Centres also campaign against unemployment, low pay, insecure work, and exploitation of the unemployed.

In addition to their campaigning work centres also advise centre users on welfare rights, represent users at Benefits Tribunals and provide training and computer facilities to assist with learning and job searches ;

Real support for people on low incomes

For many people, unemployed, sick, disabled and pensioners, benefits are often their only means of support. Unemployed workers centres

advise on what benefits are available, assist in making claims and help with form filling to get the right information across.

Each year Centres recover millions of pounds in benefits and compensation, which goes to those most in need. Not only does this benefit the individual and their family but their local economy and community as well.

They back up all this work with research on issues affecting the unemployed as well as provide resources such as rooms for meetings and library facilities.

Centres need union support

The TUC looks to Centres as natural allies and recognises the knowledge and expertise they provide on welfare and community issues.

The 2001 UWC strategy document called for more emphasis to be placed on the recruitment, retention and involvement of the unemployed by the trade union movement. This could be done by the TUC Centres and their parent body the Trade Union Councils in conjunction with the trade unions. Since then new emphasis has been given to the Centres by the decisions of the 2009 Congress in passing Resolution 82 'National TUC strategy for the defence of the TUC unemployed workers centres' and Composite 5 on trade union membership.

The trade union movement is being asked to do more to support TUC Unemployed Workers Centres through developing greater involvement by union branches and local trades union councils in existing UWCs.

It is vital though that we develop new centres, both to support trade union members whose jobs are under threat and to ensure that unemployed workers are connected to trade unions, that trade unions are seen as relevant to them as they are to working people so that when they do return to work the union is there as well.

The development of new centres is best achieved through unions and trades union councils working with regional TUC offices. A list of existing TUC Unemployed Workers Centres is attached to this briefing. Trade unions are asked to consider establishing an unemployed workers' centre in their area, in discussion with the local trades union council, if one does not exist or how they can support an existing local UWC.

Click on *Directory of TUC Unemployed Workers Centres* to find out where your nearest centre is located.

The involvement of the TUC Regional Secretary is vital to the success of any initiative in this area. The TUC Regional Secretary will be able to identify

key trade union councils, UWCs and individuals who can assist in establishing a new centre or introduce union support to a centre. Contact details for TUC Regional Secretaries are also attached to this briefing.

One Fund for All (OFFA)

But the simplest way that unions at local level can support the unemployed workers centre network is through contributing to a local One Fund for All Scheme. There are currently 14 local OFFA schemes.

One Fund for All enables union members to have a connection with their local UWC by making regular monthly or weekly donations to the local OFFA either through direct debit or 'check-off'.

OFFA is a trade union response to unemployment. Those in work are asked to give at least 20p a week or £1 a month. The money raised is used to support and improve the facilities offered by the Centres to the unemployed and their trade unions.

OFFA is –

Voluntary: people choose to give;

Accountable: contributors have a real say in how it's spent;

Vital: unemployment can strike at any time; OFFA is about Solidarity not Charity

What can you do for the centres?

Contribute to OFFA on a personal basis – lead by example!

Promote OFFA in your union at branch, regional and national level

Assist Centres with equipment etc

Play your part in the management of the Centres.

Over ¾ Million people use the Centres each year, many are trade union members. If the centres are to be there for the future they need your support now!

A list of current local OFFA Schemes for you to contact are overleaf.

TUC Appeal for the Unemployed

The TUC maintains a central fund of trade unionists' donations which is used to assist TUC Unemployed Workers Centres with particular projects. It also provides temporary financial assistance if a centre is experiencing a short fall in funding. A Bankers Standing Order Form is included in this briefing for circulation and for you to complete and begin contributing to the national appeal right away.

Where's your local OFFA

Birmingham OFFA

Birmingham Centre for the
Unemployed
448 Stratford Road
Sparkhill
Birmingham B11 4 AE
Tel 0121 551 0871/753 0721
Email btu@yahoo.com

Cleveland OFFA

Cleveland Trade Unionists and
Unemployed Workers Resource
Centre
119-121 Marton Road
Middlesborough
TS1 2QN
Tel 01642 244 200
Email bstephenson@ctuuwre.co.uk

Derbyshire OFFA

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers
Centres
70 Saltergate
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S40 1JR
Tel 01246 231441
Email colin.hampton@duwc.org.uk

East Midlands OFFA

As above

Greater Manchester OFFA

Salford Centre for the
Unemployed
84-86 Liverpool Road,
Eccles
Manchester
M30 0WZ
Tel 0161 789 2999
Email alec_stuc@hotmail.com

Ipswich OFFA

Ipswich Community Resource
Centre
16 Old Foundry Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP4 2DU
Tel 01473433244

Lancashire OFFA

Greenhill Community Centre
Beech Close
Lancashire
WN8 8DL
01695 726269
Email swltuc@talk21.com

**Merseyside and Cheshire
OFFA**

The People's Centre
50 – 54 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool
L3 5SD
Tel 0151 709 3995
Email:
info@thepeoplescentre.com

Nottinghamshire OFFA

5 St John Street
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 1QH
Tel 01623 481882
Email admin@nuwc.org.uk

Scottish OFFA

Scottish Trade Union Congress
333 Woodlands Road
Glasgow
G3 6NG
Tel 0141 337 8100

Sheffield OFFA

Unit 2, Metis
3 Scotland Street
Sheffield
S3 7AT
Email doug.low@cffe.org.uk

Tyne and Wear OFFA

Newcastle and Gateshead TUC
Centre Against Unemployment
4 Cloth market
Newcastle
NE1 1EA
Tel 0191 2324606
Email ne11ee.@fsmail.net

West Midlands OFFA

TUC Midlands Region
24 Livery Street
Birmingham
B3 2PA

West Cumbria OFFA

West Cumbria Trades Hall
Centre
39 Brow Top
Workington
Cumbria
CA14 2DP
Tel 01900 618 74
Email
enquiries@tradeshallworkington.org.uk

STANDING ORDER MANDATE
National TUC Appeal for the Unemployed

To: The Manager

(Bank Name)

(Bank Address).....

Account Name

Sort Code.....

Account Number.....

Please pay the sum of £.....

(and in words) £..... from the above account

Commencing on..... and thereafter on the of each month until further notice

Account to be credited: TUC Appeal for the Unemployed

Sort code: 086001; account number: 30076839

Signature.....

Date.....

This Standing Order Mandate supersedes all previous standing orders to TUC Appeal for the Unemployed.

Your Trade Union.....

Please return this form to:

**Tom Mellish, Organising and Recruitment Team, TUC, Congress House,
Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS**

Midlands TUC

Regional Secretary,
Cheryl Pidgeon
24 Livery Street
Birmingham B3 2PA
Telephone 0121 236 4454

Northern TUC

Regional Secretary,
Kevin Rowan,
5th Floor
Commercial Union House
39 Pilgrim Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 6QE
Telephone 0191 232 3175

North West TUC

Regional secretary,
Alan Manning
2nd Floor, Orleans House
Edmund Street
Liverpool
L3 9NG
Tel: 0151 236 5432

Southern and Eastern TUC

Regional Secretary,
Megan Dobney
Congress House
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LS
Telephone 020 7467 1220

South West TUC,

Regional Secretary,
Nigel Costley
Church House
Church Road
Bristol BS34 7BD
Telephone 0117 947 0521

Yorkshire & the Humber TUC

Regional Secretary,
Bill Adams
33 Park Place
Leeds
LS1 2RY
Telephone 0113 242 9696

Wales TUC

General Secretary,
Martin Mansfield
Transport House
1 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9SD
Telephone 029 2034 7010

The **Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC)** is

independent from the TUC,
Grahame Smith,
General Secretary
STUC Centre
333 Woodlands Road
Glasgow
G3 6NG
Tel: 0141 337 8100

