

UNISON – NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

Your union, your voice at work

■ WELCOME TO UNISON

UNISON is the UK's largest public service union, supporting staff across health, local government, education and other public services.

- We are here to improve pay, terms and conditions.
- We protect members' rights at work.
- We promote fair treatment, equality and strong public services.

■ WHAT UNISON OFFERS YOU

- Workplace advice and support
- Representation at meetings where eligible
- Legal assistance where rules and eligibility apply
- Financial and welfare support
- Training and development opportunities
- A collective voice to improve your workplace

■ YOUR RIGHTS AS A MEMBER

- Seek support and representation in workplace matters, subject to UNISON rules.
- Be treated with fairness, respect and dignity.
- Receive advice from trained UNISON representatives.
- Take part in union meetings and democratic decisions.

■ IMPORTANT: THE 28-DAY RULE

Please read carefully

You must normally be a UNISON member for at least 28 days (4 weeks) before the issue at work starts to receive full representation.

- Full representation may not be provided if the issue started before you joined.
- Full representation may not be provided if the issue occurred within your first 28 days of membership.
- Examples include disciplinary meetings, grievances, sickness reviews and capability processes.
- You may still receive basic 30 Minute phone advice or guidance and be signposted to appropriate support.

Key message: join early – do not wait until you need help.

■ YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Keep your membership payments up to date.
- Provide honest, accurate and complete information.
- Co-operate with your UNISON representative.
- Treat representatives and branch staff with respect.
- Keep your contact, workplace and employment details updated.

■ WORKING WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

- A suitable UNISON representative will be allocated where representation is available.
- You and your representative will agree how your case is handled.
- Keep your representative informed of any updates or new paperwork.
- Support relies on full and honest communication.

■ KEEP YOUR MEMBERSHIP ACTIVE

- Stay a current UNISON member while receiving support.
- Continue paying subscriptions if your circumstances change.
- If membership stops or payments fall into arrears, support may be affected.

■ GET INVOLVED

- Attend branch meetings.
- Vote on workplace issues.
- Become a workplace representative or contact the branch to find out more.

■ NEED HELP OR ADVICE? CONTACT UNISON GATESHEAD HEALTH BRANCH

UNISON Office, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE9 6SX

Telephone: 0191 445 2371

Email: ghnt.unison@nhs.net

Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 2:00pm

Key branch contacts: Judith Selim, Office Manager; Rebecca Ash / Julie Lee, Branch Secretaries.

Your UNISON BRANCH is your first point of contact who will allocate you a rep.

■ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Joining UNISON and getting support

Q: When does my UNISON membership start?

A: Your membership usually starts from the date your first subscription payment is made.

Q: Can I get representation straight away?

A: Not always. You must normally be a member for at least 28 days (4 weeks) before the issue starts. If your issue began before joining or within the first 28 days, full representation may not be available.

Q: Why can't UNISON represent issues that started before I joined?

A: The rule is designed to ensure fairness to all members, prevent joining only at the point of needing help, and help the union manage cases effectively.

Q: Will I get any help if I'm within the 28-day period?

A: You may still receive basic advice or guidance and information to help you understand your situation. Full representation may not be provided.

Q: What counts as an "issue start date"?

A: This is usually when an incident occurred or when a process began, such as a disciplinary, sickness review, capability process or grievance.

Q: Do I need to stay a member during my case?

A: Yes. You must remain a paying member while UNISON is supporting you. If membership stops, support may also stop.

Q: What do I need to do to get support?

A: Contact your local UNISON representative early, provide honest and complete information, and keep your membership up to date.

Q: Can UNISON refuse to support a case?

A: UNISON may withdraw or decline support if membership rules are not met, information is inaccurate or incomplete, or there is a lack of co-operation.

Q: Who will represent me?

A: UNISON will identify the most appropriate representative. This may be a workplace representative or branch official.

Q: What is the best way to make sure I'm covered?

A: Join early and keep your membership active.

■ REMEMBER

UNISON is here to support you — but membership rules must be followed to ensure fair access for everyone.

Stronger together: joining UNISON is not just about support when things go wrong; it is about improving the workplace for everyone.

Information based on UNISON rulebook/member support information and Gateshead Health Branch public contact details. Please check the latest UNISON rulebook and branch guidance for updates before circulation.