

## Latest Survey Highlights Members' Priorities

**Last year NACO released a survey to members and non-members alike asking for input to determine the future direction of the Association. The response was fantastic and will be very valuable in helping us to make our plans.**

NACO represents co-operative employees from all areas of the movement and this was reflected in the survey results, with responses from all divisions of the Co-operative Group, CFS, and the independent societies.

To set a benchmark for our current performance we asked respondents to rate NACO on various aspects of our work. 81% said salary negotiations were managed very well or acceptably, mirrored by negotiation of terms and conditions, legal advice and representation, and employment advice all scoring over 85% approval.

When asked what NACO should focus on for the future, we covered all areas of working life, terms and conditions of employment and other benefits. In rank order, here are your top five priorities:

- Pension provision
- Holiday entitlement
- Performance related bonus
- Death in service
- Sickness benefit

These are followed closely by flexible working, parental leave and maternity/paternity leave.

We'll be working hard to keep these issues at the top of our agenda. Of course, NACO does much more than this – if you need help or advice, get in touch with one of our officials and see what we can do for you.



NACO's new website [naco.coop](http://naco.coop)

Away from NACO's role in industrial relations, an all-too-common concern of the membership was a perceived lack of communication by NACO. We are constantly looking to improve the service we offer our members and provide even better value for money.

Looking at the demographics of our membership, it is clear that, like many other trade unions, membership amongst younger people is lower than we would like. We believe the trade union movement is extremely valuable and as relevant today as it ever has been. NACO has a part to play in the development of younger co-operators and it is hoped that a new approach to member engagement will make the Association more approachable and more relevant to this under-represented group.

The Association has created a visual style with the *co-operative official* and our poster campaigns and this will be brought to life when our new website is launched in spring 2011. Complemented by regular email newsletters, the changes will provide members with better visibility of the work undertaken by NACO, and include more articles from the wider co-operative movement.

Our commitment to improved communications comes from you, our members. We really hope the changes we make provide a great improvement to the way you view and engage with the Association. As such, we will be paying close attention to the

success of our new strategy and we welcome your feedback along the way.

To ensure we're on the right track we'll be releasing a new member survey later this year – asking for your opinion of NACO services and what you want to see the union doing in future years.

If you're a regular on Facebook or love to Tweet we'd be delighted to have you as fans and followers – by regularly posting, you can help guide NACO and make sure we're delivering the service our members want (see page 8). We understand too that a lot of people don't use social networking sites (and that includes some of our officials!) so your input in person, over the phone, or by email would also be great.



Neil Buist, General Secretary

# Welcome

The results of our survey, outlined on the front page, provide a valuable insight into members' and non-members' views and we appreciate the feedback received from all those who took part.

It is encouraging to know that at least four fifths of those who responded to the survey thought that salary negotiations, negotiation of terms and conditions, legal advice and representation, and employment advice were managed very well or acceptably by NACO. We also gained a lot of useful information about your priorities, which we will be working hard to achieve.

However, the perceived lack of communication from the Association is one area we are keen to address, and to that end I'd like to welcome Matt Arrowsmith on board as our new Membership Development Officer. As you will see from the article opposite, Matt's role will include marketing and communications, and he will play an important part in helping to raise the profile of the Association and expanding our communications.

Some of the other changes we are planning are explained on the front page, but I'd just like to highlight the relaunch of our website (if you haven't seen it yet, please do take a look!) and our growing social network presence, for example on Facebook and Twitter (see page 8 for details of how to find us on these sites). We hope this new approach to communications will encourage more people - and more young co-operators in particular - to get involved with the Association.

In response to our member survey, we have also decided that the *co-operative official* will be moving to an online-only format from our Autumn 2011 issue. This will be delivered by email and available on our website. In addition to the financial and environmental benefits, the online-only version will allow us to provide more information, easier interaction with members and links to other resources. (See page 8.)

We will be monitoring members' views again later this year and we look forward to hearing from you then. However, please do feel free to contact us at any time with your thoughts on how we are doing, or come along to our AGM in May and take part in the discussions there. As you can see from the article on page 3, we will be joined at the Members' Meeting by Gareth Thomas MP, Chair of the Co-operative Party, and there will be a presentation from Help for Heroes, our President's charity.

NACO President Ann Breen's review of 2010 on page 4 sets out the performance of the Association over the past 12 months and highlights some of the challenges we have faced. As for many organisations, 2010 hasn't been an easy year but, as Ann says, we believe we have the strategy in place to weather the storm and the officials of NACO are working hard to achieve this.

Finally, our article on page 7 sets out the advantages of union membership and, as you will see, the benefits are worth billions to the economy - it's not just NACO that says being a union member is a good thing!

Happy reading!

## Highlights

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## Matt Arrowsmith joins NACO



Matt Arrowsmith

**Matt Arrowsmith has joined NACO as Membership Development Officer, a new role focusing on membership recruitment, marketing and communications.**

Since graduating from Keele University, Matt has worked in a number of co-operative and mutually run businesses - starting his career as a Marketing Executive for Poptel, a former worker's co-operative in Manchester, through to his most recent role at The Phone Co-op where he worked in Business Sales.

Matt has a strong background in employee representation having been chair of The Phone Co-op's Employee Council when they introduced NACO as a trade union. You may have noticed him from a previous issue of *co-operative official* when he was elected to the NACO General Council in 2009.

Matt explains: "I took some time out to travel and on my return to the UK I wanted to continue working within the co-operative movement. My experience at the Phone Co-op really opened my eyes to the values and principles of the movement and I was focused on finding a job in an organisation I really valued."

"Having been involved with NACO previously, I was well aware of the great work undertaken by the Association, so when a job came up that suited my skills I jumped at the chance."

Matt will be responsible for recruiting new members to the Association as well as increasing the frequency of member communications through email newsletters, our new website and use of social networking.

When Matt's not working he likes to spend time with friends - cycling, swimming, climbing, diving and kayaking; especially when followed by some good food and a proper pint of beer!

All the team at NACO would like to wish Matt well in his new role!

## AGM - Latest News



Thistle Hotel East Midlands Airport

**The programme for this year's NACO Annual General Meeting is taking shape.**

The AGM, which is followed by our Members' Meeting, takes place at the Thistle Hotel East Midlands Airport on 18 May.

We are delighted that Gareth Thomas, Member of Parliament and Chair of the Co-operative Party, will be speaking at the event and there will also be a presentation from Help for Heroes, our President's charity.

Also at the AGM we will present the NACO Awards, there will be a review of the Association's performance in 2010 - including adopting the annual report - and there will be a presentation on NACO's strategic plans. In addition, there will be the motions to the AGM, including the presentation of a new Rule Book, which will contain details of revised membership categories for NACO. (If you are unsure about which membership category you should be in, please contact us.)

We would also encourage as many people as possible to come along to the President's Dinner which kicks off proceedings on the evening of 17 May.

Neil Buist says: "The AGM is a great chance for our members to get together and catch up with everything that has happened at NACO over the previous year and to look ahead to the future. We would urge members to come along as it is sure to be an interesting day. We look forward to welcoming you."

**Full details of the AGM programme will be available on our website.**



# 2010 Review



Ann Breen, NACO President

**I think it is fair to say that 2010 proved another challenging year for the Association. As we all know, the state of the economy remained precarious and this, coupled with the continued effects of the integration of The Co-operative Financial Services and Britannia Building Society, inevitably took its toll on NACO membership numbers. However, both the NACO team and the General Council have responded very positively to the challenges ahead and I am extremely confident of the strategy we have in place to see us through these turbulent times.**

The number of NACO members fell by 121 in 2010, from 2,120 to 1,999. This compares to a decrease of 103 in 2009, following small increases in the previous two years. Whilst 2010 saw a reduction in the number of leavers, there was also a slow down in new members joining NACO.

Whilst there have been no mergers in the movement to impact on membership losses compared to previous years, 2010 has seen the ongoing integration of The Co-operative Financial Services and Britannia Building Society. This has resulted in a small but steady stream of leavers during the Organisational Design exercise and the programme is likely to continue into 2012. Alongside this, NACO will be involved in Project Unity - the unification of the trading and financial services businesses of the Co-operative Group (see article on page 10).

The decline in the number of new members recruited is a very disappointing result for us and the General Council has carefully considered the impact of this. The restructuring of the NACO team in summer 2010 was both necessary and appropriate, but resulted in a significant reduction in the opportunity for officials to focus on member recruitment. The recruitment of Matt Arrowsmith as Membership Development Officer (as reported elsewhere in this issue) will help to address this.

2010 has been another busy year for NACO officials with regard to individual cases pursued. 74 cases were concluded in 2010, resulting in over £4.4 million compensation being received by the members concerned.

Turning to the finances of the Association, for year-ending 31 December 2010 NACO recorded an operating deficit of £46,009, compared to £90,575 in 2009, with an overall pre-tax deficit of £4,261.

Operating income increased significantly in 2010, up by 16.7% to £552,210 from £473,032 in 2009. This was largely due to the Investment Portfolio generating a profit on the sale of Investments to the sum of £89,550. Subscription income decreased by 3.2%, which is in line with the drop in membership numbers.

Whilst NACO officials and the General Council have maintained strong control of operating expenditure, this increased during the year by 6.1% for three specific reasons: VAT and legal fees were higher than in previous years, and as a result of restructuring costs. Had this expenditure not been incurred, NACO would have made a small surplus.

A change in Accounting Policy in 2010 by the General Council has resulted in the Investment Portfolio now being shown at market value instead of at cost, in order to accurately reflect the funds available to NACO. As a consequence, in the Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year-ending 31 December 2010, the 2009 Accounts have been re-stated to represent the change in market value of the investments, to provide comparative figures with 2010.

Despite the reported deficit, the Association remains financially strong with net assets in excess of £1.1 million. The General Council is confident that the significant reserves that NACO has built up over recent years provide a solid foundation to weather the current economic uncertainty.

Looking ahead, 2011 is likely to be another demanding year for the Association. For example, the proposed Joint Venture involving the Co-operative Group, Midlands Co-operative Society and Thomas Cook will see the creation of a new travel business (subject to Competition Commission review), which could potentially result in approximately 90 members of NACO transferring from the Group and Midlands. Whilst these members would of course be entitled to continuity of membership, it could eventually lead to them leaving NACO at some time in the near future.

NACO officials have continued to represent members' interests effectively during 2010 - both individually and collectively - and I would like to reassure members that the General Council is working hard to implement the strategy that will ensure the success of the Association for many years to come.

**Ann Breen  
President**

## Past Presidents Support the Robert Owen Group

**Two former Presidents of NACO, Jack Devers and Roger Davies, are closely involved in the work of the Robert Owen Group. Roger Davies is currently Chair and Jack Devers was recently appointed as a Director.**



Former NACO Presidents Jack Devers (left) and Roger Davies

Roger Davies first got to know about the Robert Owen Group - or the Marches Consortium as it was then - in the mid 90s, when he worked for the Co-operative Group. He co-operated with them at a number of events and was impressed with the work they did. Roger was invited to join the Board of the Robert Owen Group in the late Nineties and has been Chair for the last five years or so.

The Robert Owen Group is one of the largest education and training co-operatives in the UK, offering services and support to local schools and colleges through teacher training, regeneration and social enterprise opportunities. It is based in Herefordshire, and operates throughout the Marches and West Midlands region.

Roger says the appeal of getting involved with the Robert Owen Group was about "working with likeminded people to further the co-operative ethos".

In fact, it was Roger who first introduced the Robert Owen Group to NACO. The Group and NACO have established a close working relationship and since 2008 the Group has paid for NACO membership for all its employees.

As Roger says: "The Robert Owen Group wanted to give something back to its employees, so we decided to pay for trade union membership."

Roger says his role as Chair involves overseeing the policies and strategy of the organisation, such as what services it should offer and how it can continue to expand and grow. He says he spends two or three days a week on average working voluntarily for the Group.

Jack Devers is new to the position of Director at the Robert Owen Group and says he is honoured to have been appointed.

Jack first got to know the Group when he was NACO President last year. He was interested in the work they did and liked what he saw, so was keen to get more closely involved. Jack thinks that the work of the Group is especially important in helping to teach young people about co-operative values and principles.

"It's about giving people a good start in life and teaching them to respect others and themselves," he says.

Jack says he is looking forward to representing NACO at the Group and playing a role in helping to shape its future.

[www.robertowen.org](http://www.robertowen.org)

## Co-operative Travel Transfer Update

**As reported in the last edition of *co-operative official*, the Co-operative Group and Thomas Cook announced proposals last autumn to create a new joint venture travel business.**

Although NACO is seeking to work closely with the Group, Midlands Co-operative Society and Thomas Cook on behalf of those members affected, the referral of the deal to the Competition Commission means it is likely to be several months before a decision on the joint venture is reached.

Neil Buist says: "NACO will continue to meet with the Group and Midlands Society, and is seeking discussions with Thomas Cook, so it can represent members' interests throughout the proposed transfer of Co-operative Travel personnel to the new joint venture and afterwards."

NACO will provide those members who are affected by the changes with regular newsletters to keep them updated of the latest developments.

## NACO Strengthens Links with

### The Phone Co-op

The Phone Co-op has always valued staff highly. An active Employee Council provides staff input in business strategy, as well as organising social events and promoting The Phone Co-op's Why Don't You? Fund, their fresh fruit campaign and staff cycle policy.

NACO has been representing staff at The Phone Co-op since 2008. In 2009, a Partnership Agreement between NACO and The Phone Co-op was signed and collective bargaining rights were awarded to the trade union. As well as negotiating pay and conditions, the union has been working closely with Phone Co-op staff and working with senior management on ways of further improving terms and conditions.

NACO now represents over 65% of the co-operative's full-time employees. Building on a great relationship, a local union branch or Constituent Association was formed in 2010. Eight members of staff now run this workplace group and work with NACO's full-time officials to further promote the interest of staff as key stakeholders within The Phone Co-op.

## Phone and Broadband Offer to Members

In a separate move, NACO and The Phone Co-op have also joined forces to make an unbeatable offer to NACO members. Any member who signs up to one of their great value phone and broadband packages will get 10% off their bill every month.

To find out more, visit [www.thephone.coop/naco](http://www.thephone.coop/naco) or call 0845 458 9040, making sure you quote AF0476 to take advantage of the special offer.

**thePhoneCo-op**  
it's your call

## High Praise for Legal Helpline

Colin Downes can't speak highly enough of the legal advice service for members provided by Thompsons Solicitors.

Members of NACO and their families are entitled to a free 30 minute legal advice consultation on any issue. Member Colin Downes, who is Head of Risk Management at Midlands Co-op, decided to call Thompsons for advice after he lent money to a family member who didn't pay him back.

"Thompsons gave me good, impartial advice, spelling out the implications of the different options open to me," explains Colin.

Colin says he should have known better than to lend to a family member. The family member declared himself bankrupt, so Colin couldn't recover the loan, and although the debt passed to the family member's wife, she declared herself bankrupt a year later.

"Although I was entitled to half an hour's free legal advice, I never got the feeling that the clock was running. The person who helped me was patient and focused and went away to find out more about some of the issues involved."

The service was excellent, says Colin. "There was no pressure on me and Thompsons always rang me back promptly when they said they would."

Colin adds that, although his job often involves dealing with legal issues, for anyone with less legal knowledge than him, the service could provide great comfort.

Colin would encourage other members to take advantage of the service as soon as they think they need legal advice. As he says: "It's not just work related issues that Thompsons can help with, but private issues too. If I'd have called Thompsons in the beginning, I could have saved myself hundreds of pounds."

To obtain legal advice, please contact NACO head office in the first instance. The free service provided by Thompsons is in addition to the services that NACO provides for any employment issues that require specialist assistance.



## The Union Advantage

Set against the background of a struggling economy, public sector cuts and unemployment close to 8%, more and more people are looking to their trade union for support and representation. But what's the big advantage?

Trade unions have long been associated with a fair deal for employees, improving working conditions and ensuring a decent rate of pay for their members. Today, that is still as relevant as ever - a poll conducted by the TUC shows that 70% of new union members rank health and safety in the workplace as a major factor when becoming a union member, followed closely by rates of pay and holiday entitlement.

Pay negotiation ranks highly amongst almost all union members, and rightly so - figures from the Office of National Statistics published in 2009 show that unionised workers are paid on average 12.5% more than their non-represented equivalents. Women earn 9% more when part of a union, and black and Asian employees feel less discriminated against and better rewarded - an additional 8% in their pay-packet compared with non-unionised workers from the same demographic.

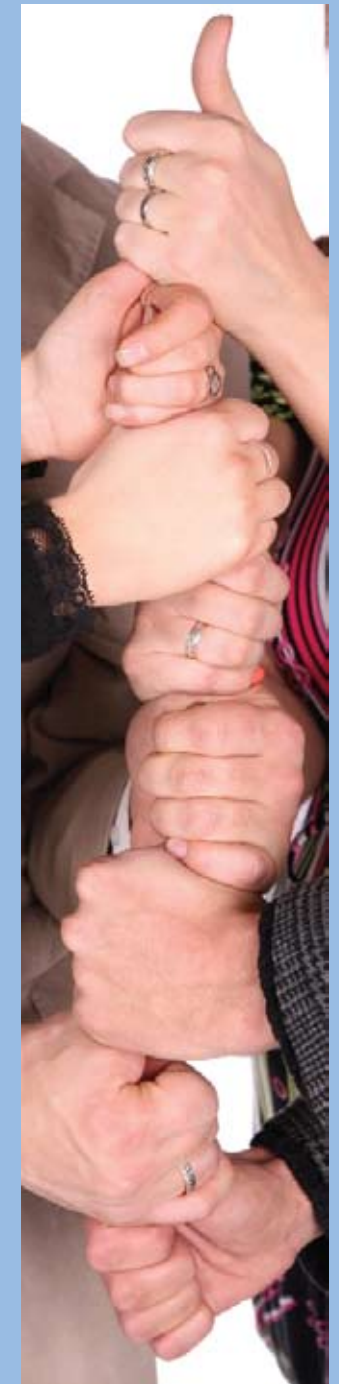
NACO General Secretary Neil Buist commented: "NACO is proud to have made a significant contribution to the happiness and well-being of our members. Everyone at NACO is committed to ensuring all members are equally well represented and these figures show that we, and the wider trade union movement, are doing a great job and making a real contribution."

“Trade unions have long been associated with a fair deal for employees, improving working conditions and ensuring a decent rate of pay for their members.”

The good news is not all one sided either. Employers that work closely with trade unions benefit greatly from expert advice relating to all aspect of employment law and best practice resulting in longer-serving employees and less conflict at work.

The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) commented that over 185,000 working days are saved each year by the active involvement of trade unions in making workplaces safer and reducing work-related illness. Studies by the TUC have shown that with union assistance and mediation, employers are significantly less likely to be brought to tribunal. An active union can ensure workplace issues are identified and fixed long before big problems occur - if the employer is still at fault the union will be there too, evidence shows that on average, unfair dismissal awards are three times greater for members, than for those without professional representation by trade unions.

Considering the role of trade unions in creating happier, safer employees, the DTI believes the value to the economy is an estimated £10.2 billion per year - put into context that's just short of the Government's entire Northern Ireland budget of £10.3 billion.



## Obituary: Joe Scullion



Joe Scullion (right) receiving the Kevin Yorath Memorial Award in 2008

**It is with sadness that we report the death of Joe Scullion, a former member of the NACO General Council and the Co-operative Group Council.**

Joe became an active member of NACO when he was elected to the General Council in May 2001 and joined the Co-operative Group Council in September 2001. He was a keen advocate of the Association and encouraged his colleagues to join and take an active part in its running.

Joe Scullion worked for the Co-operative Group and started out as an assistant manager in a Co-op store in Glasgow. He then became the manager of the merchandising teams which were involved in the remerchandising of stores throughout Scotland, and, as a result, became involved with the new science of space planning. Joe went on to work in project management in facilities - where he worked with colleagues across all sections of the food business.

In 2008 Joe was awarded the Kevin Yorath Memorial Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to NACO.

"We are extremely sad to hear about Joe's death," says Neil Buist. "Joe played a valuable role at NACO and was dedicated to his work for the Association. He made a significant contribution over a number of years and was committed to helping his colleagues and fellow members on both individual and collective issues."

## co-operative official Moving to Electronic Format

**In response to our 2010 member survey, we have taken the decision to move co-operative official to an online-only format from our Autumn 2011 issue - delivered by email and available 24/7 at [www.naco.coop](http://www.naco.coop).**

Going online-only will allow us to provide more information on articles featured in the newsletter, members will be able to contact us and reply to articles more easily and we'll be linking to other sources for further information, current news and multimedia content.

Of course, there are financial and environmental benefits to this too. The current print-run for co-operative official is 2,500 copies per quarter. Moving online allows us to reduce our paper use by 30,000 A4 sheets annually (equivalent to two trees) and to make significant savings on print and distribution costs.

NACO currently maintains a database of member email addresses, though a small number of members don't currently have an address listed and some records are out of date. To ensure you continue to receive your copy of co-operative official it is important that you make sure we have a valid and current email address listed for you. Please email [info@nacoco-op.org](mailto:info@nacoco-op.org) or use the contact details below to update your records:

National Association of Co-operative Officials,  
6a Clarendon Place, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2QZ.  
Tel: 0161 351 7900 Fax: 0161 366 6800

## Social Networking

**Joining many co-operative businesses and trade unions, NACO now has a Facebook community page and Twitter feed, both designed to increase and improve interaction with members and enable NACO to be part of the online co-operative movement.**

In the UK alone Facebook has over 24 million active users and Twitter has around 1 million. The co-operative movement has been quick to see the advantages of both sites and a lively community of debate and shared information is now easily available.

To find us on Facebook, search [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) for 'NACO trade union'.

To find us on Twitter, search within [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) for 'NACOtradeunion'.

## Charity Golf Day 2011

**This year's President's Charity Golf Day takes place on Wednesday 29 June.**

The event, which is being held at Morley Hayes Hotel and Golf Club near Derby, will be in aid of Help for Heroes.

The Golf Day is made up of teams of four players (it doesn't matter about your ability or handicap!) and costs £40 per person to enter. The competition is open to NACO members and their friends and family and the price includes a round of golf and a two course meal afterwards.



As well as looking for competitors, we are also looking for societies who would like to sponsor a hole or donate raffle prizes. The cost to sponsor a hole is £500 - but this allows four members from your society to take part in the competition and join us for dinner.



We hope that as many NACO members as possible can come along and join in the fun, while also raising money for a great cause. Last year's event raised over £4,000 and it would be great to be on par with that!

To register for the Golf Day or to find out more please email Nicola Schofield at NACO at [NS@nacoco-op.org](mailto:NS@nacoco-op.org).



## NACO Members

### Back Single Terms and Conditions at CFS

**NACO members have voted in favour of the new Single Terms and Conditions (STC) proposed by The Co-operative Financial Services (CFS).**

Following the merger of CFS and Britannia Building Society in 2009, the new organisation needed to create a consistent set of terms and conditions of employment.

In their negotiations with CFS, the three recognised trade unions, which includes NACO, focused on protecting the existing terms and conditions of their members and seeking enhancements where possible. This followed a consultation with members in early 2010.

As the proposals represented a change to existing terms and conditions of employment, the STC needed

to be put to a ballot of trade union members. Only members of the CFS-recognised trade unions were eligible to vote, even though non-members are also affected by the outcome, highlighting yet again the importance of being a member of a trade union such as NACO.

"We are pleased that our members voted to accept the new terms and conditions, as we believe this was the best possible deal we could have achieved," says Neil Buist. "In fact, most of our members will have the same or slightly enhanced terms and conditions of employment."

If you have any questions about the new STC and how it affects you, please contact NACO head office.

# Project Unity Unveiled

The co-operative

In November 2010, the Co-operative Group announced plans to unify its financial services and trading businesses in a move designed to underpin the continuing renaissance of the Co-operative Group as a major UK retailer and financial services provider.

From the beginning of 2011, Co-operative Financial Services (CFS) and the Group's trading businesses came together under a new Group senior management structure. This confirmed that Martyn Wates and Neville Richardson would become Deputy Group Chief Executives reporting to Peter Marks as Co-operative Group Chief Executive.

The Unity Programme Board will oversee the opportunities to drive business performance in a unified way. The Unity Programme Director is Cheryl Marshall, and the Programme Board comprises of Peter Marks and Management Executive members Neville Richardson, Martyn Wates, Tim Hurrell, Steve Humes, Moira Lees, Martyn Hulme, Gill Barr, Richard Bide and Mark Craig.

The Programme Board announced that the benefits of working even more closely together will include:

- All businesses having the same customer facing strategy
- Leveraging the benefits of the rejuvenated brand
- Increasing synergies and cross-selling opportunities between businesses
- Generating improvements through organic growth.

The guiding principles for the Unity Programme confirm that unification would enable the Co-operative Group to maximise benefits, adopt best practice from across the Group and provide for a transparent HR process throughout. The Group has committed to communicate openly and honestly at all stages of the programme and seeks to minimise disruption and risk through a robust process.

The Group acknowledges that there are many challenges ahead for it to deliver one business in

two years, whilst maintaining strong results and minimising disruption, and that all employees have a role to play, either in working directly on the programme or in continuing to build upon the results achieved across the Group.

However, as Peter Marks says: "I am sure that we all recognise the tremendous opportunities which will arise from working more closely together across the whole Group."

Cheryl Marshall says: "The programme is still very much in its infancy, but we will keep NACO members who work at the Group fully informed of progress and we will provide a more detailed update to all members of NACO in the next issue of *co-operative official*."

Neil Buist adds: "Whilst we acknowledge and welcome the significant benefits which could result from a new combined Group, we will be working closely with the Group on behalf of our members to ensure that their terms and conditions of employment are protected and that the impact on jobs is kept to a minimum."



# New Paternity Leave Rights

**New dads will soon be able to take advantage of paternity leave rights which will significantly increase the amount of time they can take off work.**

Fathers of children born or matched for adoption from 3 April onwards will have the right to take up to 26 weeks' leave - instead of the current two - to care for the baby.

To qualify for the new right, the father must be an employee (someone who has an employment contract), and must have worked for the same employer for at least six months at the start of the 15th week before the child is born or matched for adoption.

Before he can start his leave, however, the baby has to be at least 20 weeks old and the mother has to have returned to work from her maternity leave. And it has to finish at the end of the 52nd week after the child's birth or placement for adoption.

The baby's mother must be entitled to statutory maternity leave or pay, maternity allowance or statutory adoption leave or pay for the father to benefit from the new rights.

The father will only get paternity pay during the time his partner would have received maternity or adoption pay or maternity allowance. Currently this is £124.88 per week, rising to £128.73 in April.

Fathers have to give eight weeks' written notice before taking the leave which must be taken in multiples of complete weeks - a minimum of two and a maximum of 26.

The leave is also available to employees who are not the father of the baby but who will be responsible for bringing up the child and are married to, or are the same sex civil partner of, the child's mother.

Although the Coalition Government recently labelled the new rules "inflexible" and not supportive of "shared parenting", it has decided to leave them in place for the time being while it explores the options for a more "flexible" system. This, it says, should allow mothers and fathers to split the leave in whatever way suits them best, whilst taking into account the needs of employers and being simple to administer.

# Warning!!!



## Energy prices are rising

Take action now and you could save your annual NACO subs (and maybe more) by switching energy suppliers with Union Energy!

Union Energy's free 100% impartial energy price comparison service will find the most competitively-priced gas and electricity providers in your area to help keep your home energy bills as low as possible. And if you register for our Lifetime Energy Monitoring Programme we'll contact you again when energy prices change to ensure that you continue to save money in the long term.

It only takes a couple of minutes to find out how much you could save and many customers have already saved more than their annual union subs. Go on, give it a try!

**Call 0800 094 9039** (Mon-Thurs 9am-6pm; Fri 9am-4pm; Sat 9am-1pm)

NB: Union Energy's service can be used by households in England, Scotland and Wales (mainland only).

### co-operative official

*co-operative official* is published by National Association of Co-operative Officials, 6a Clarendon Place, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 2QZ.

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Editorial co-ordination by Ethos public relations - [www.ethos-pr.com](http://www.ethos-pr.com)  
*co-operative official* is printed on 55% recycled paper with the remainder coming from sustainable sources.

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