



Local Service Champions Day

Thursday 17 October 2019

Briefing for
branches and
activists

On Thursday 17 October, UNISON activists and local communities will join together to celebrate members working in local government services – our Local Service Champions! This celebration day is a part of UNISON's campaign to raise the profile of local government workers across UNISON, reminding the public, media and politicians of the vital work that local government staff do and the services they deliver.

Local government workers are true local champions. Working as a team, both on the frontline and 'behind the scenes', they encourage our communities to thrive and help the most vulnerable in our society. They often go above and beyond to support people, working under the constant pressures of unfair funding cuts and rising demands for help. Far too often the dedication of local government workers is overlooked and they don't get the recognition that they deserve.

By focussing on the impact of local government workers and the value of the work they do, UNISON aims to add weight to our anti-cuts campaigns and our calls on the Government for more local government funding.

Find out more at:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/local-service-champions/>

Local Service Champions Day – Thursday 17 October

Below are some of our campaign's key messages for the celebration day, with more information about local government workers and the importance of local government services for local residents, businesses and the wider community. You can use these in any local materials you create for Local Service Champions Day or when talking to people about the campaign.

Key messages

- Local council workers are there to support you in every area of your life and community. From registering a birth to helping you arrange the burial of a loved one, your local services and the people who work for them are there to support us throughout our lives. As well as working to support the most vulnerable in our society, through preventative services and social care, you can find local government workers in every part of your community, including:

- 👍 parks
- 👍 schools
- 👍 local museums or theatres
- 👍 housing
- 👍 libraries



- **Use Local Service Champions Day to show your support for council workers and find out about the huge diversity of jobs in local government!** There are hundreds of different job roles in your local council, all contributing to keeping our communities running smoothly. Some local authorities are responsible for services that you would not expect, including massage and acupuncturist registration, collecting unclaimed stray animals and helping to organise local visits from the royal family.
- **The wealth of knowledge and experience that local government workers bring to their work every day is at risk due to austerity.** Many UNISON members in local government have worked in their jobs for years, sometimes decades, developing a wide-ranging understanding of their work area. Many local service champions have the experience to deal with whatever comes up in their working day. However, regular cuts and restructures have meant that an increasing number of these workers leave local government or retire earlier than planned. This brain drain from the sector can lead to fewer opportunities for new members of staff to draw on colleagues' experience when they need support and a lack of consistency for service users.
- **The Local Service Champions campaign is calling on the Government to inject significant funding into local government services to prevent any further closures or cuts.** The Local Government Association (LGA) estimates that councils across England will need an extra £5.8 billion in the next year, and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will also need considerable amounts of extra funding to avoid any further closures. By giving local authorities enough funding to put a pause on planned cuts to services and staff, the Government could show the public that it is serious about its recent claims that austerity is over.

Facts and stats about the contribution local government workers make

- The local government sector is one of the largest employers in the UK, employing 2.04 million people (as of December 2018). But it has lost 875,000 workers since 2010.
- There are around 800 distinct occupations in local government.
- 42% of local government workers said that they wanted to work in local government because of its public service ethos; being able to make a difference to people's lives and their communities.



- 60% of local government workers have said that they work beyond their contracted hours.
- Community leisure services contribute almost £3.3bn social value across the UK, having a positive impact on health, wellbeing, education and reducing crime.
- 81% of teachers think it either 'likely' or 'very likely' that pupils had learned more about other people and communities as a result of visits to museums.
- Almost half (48%) of members of the public are opposed to their local council reducing or closing services or facilities.

How to get involved

Taking part in Local Service Champions Day on 17 October is the perfect chance to talk to local government workers, both UNISON members and not, about the value of local services and the contribution that local government workers make to their local communities. See below for some ideas of what you can do to support the campaign in the lead up to and on the 17 October (make sure you let us know what you are doing locally by email – **sos@unison.co.uk** – or on our social media):

- Follow our social media accounts: we're @UNISONinLG on Twitter **<https://twitter.com/UNISONinLG>** and 'UNISON in Local Government' on Facebook **<https://www.facebook.com/UnisonInLocalGovernment/>** Share our posts and your stories about the unsung heroes working in local government using the hashtag #localservicechampions
- Do you know any UNISON members who love the work they do and would be happy to talk to UNISON's media team about their jobs and the contribution they make to their local community for our website or magazine? Get in touch with us at **sos@unison.co.uk**
- Encourage members of the public and local government staff to either take a photo with a local service champion they know or take a photo of themselves, with an explanation of the work they do in local government and how it helps their community. Ask them to post it on social media using the hashtag #localservicechampions or they can email it to us at **sos@unison.co.uk**
- Work with your branch to do a walk round of your local authority's town hall and other council run services. Talk to staff about the aims of this campaign. Ask them about their jobs and what their concerns are at work. Tell them about how UNISON can support them and our



campaign against cuts to local government funding (you can find out more about our anti-cuts campaigns here: <https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/save-our-local-services/>)

- Ask your branch to invite the chief executive of the council, councillors or MPs to shadow a team in one of the local authority's departments for the day – to find out what it's really like for the workers delivering services.
- Hold a lunchtime Champions Day party at a local government workplace to celebrate all staff and thank them for the work they do. Invite the chief executive of the council, local councillors or your local MP to attend.
- Have a competition to find local service champions where you work. Ask colleagues to nominate their local service champion with an explanation of why they should win. Have a small prize up for grabs, which can be presented at a lunchtime event for Local Service Champions Day.
- Ask your local authority's chief executive, local councillors or local MP to support the campaign by writing to your local paper about the value of local government workers in their community, UNISON's Local Service Champions Day and why they are supporting us.

When you have planned your activities to support the Local Service Champions campaign, remember to:

- Tell us what you will be doing by email – sos@unison.co.uk or on social media. Make sure you send us any photos of your events and let us know how it went afterwards!
- Tell the local media what you'll be doing – take a look at page 19 of the Save Our Local Services campaigning guide for extra tips on using the media for your campaign.

