

Guidance to branches on how to set up and use a local hardship fund

Setting up a Hardship Fund [the Fund]

The decision to set up a branch Hardship Fund should be taken by a quorate general meeting of the branch.

- The branch must establish terms and conditions for access to the Fund and a fair application process, made available to all branch members. When setting terms the branch should have regard to the likely demand and the maximums adopted for the national Fighting Fund. The terms should emphasise alleviation of hardship.
- The application process must include a membership check and confirmation from the member that they will not receive more than the total loss from combined applications to UCU accredited funds.
- Monies donated or transferred to the Fund must be held in a separate Unity Trust Bank account [see below for details how to open a new account].
- The branch can decide to transfer any funds from its general account that it deems excess to the general running requirements of the branch. Branches employing local staff, should check with the UCU Finance Department to ensure sufficient reserves are kept to avoid risk to staff. [Contact gstorey@ucu.org.uk]
- The branch must establish a panel of three officers, including the Branch Treasurer, to assess claims to the Fund and to oversee payments made from it.
- Payments should only be made from the Fund's bank account specifically set up for the purpose [for proper audit examination] and made by internet payment to the member concerned.
- Claims must only be agreed and payments made on proof of loss of pay [usually a copy of a payslip*]. Copies of evidence must be retained in the branch accounts, by the Branch Treasurer, for audit purposes.
- For audit purposes please keep a file of evidence, payslips, local hardship forms completed by the member, as well as payment details.
- All claims to the Fund must be submitted within 3 months of the loss of pay concerned.
- The Fund must be submitted for audit as part of the annual audit of branch accounts and all records will be called in for the annual national audit of UCU accounts.
- The accounts for the Fund may be called in by head office at the end of a period of industrial action for national reporting purposes.

* Other evidence may be accepted from members on insecure, hourly paid contracts. For example timesheets and comparative payslips that show loss of pay. Further advice on the suitability of other evidence of loss is available from UCU head office [fightingfund@ucu.org.uk]

Opening a new UTB bank account

- The application form for a new account is available on the following website <https://apply.unity.co.uk/>
- The account must be opened in the name of the UCU branch and include the words 'Hardship Fund' as well as the Branch code.
- To the question: 'Are you an existing Unity Trust customer?', the answer is yes. During the process you will be asked to submit your existing branch account number. This is essential for linking purposes.
- To the question: 'Is this an application for a subsidiary company, trading arm or new legal entity?' – the reply is NO
- The on screen instructions should then be followed.
- The account must be set up to require two signatures for payments but can include any two officers on the administering panel.
- At the end of the application process, you print the application form, the signatories sign the application form and send to Unity Trust Bank.*
- Unity Trust will make a charge for opening a new account [currently £25] and this will be payable from the branch general fund.
- The application process will take up to 10 working days so branches need to start this process as soon as the decision is made to set up the Fund.

*you can either upload the application form on to the Unity Trust web site or post the form to the bank.

HQ will need to verify the signatories on the account, which is a Unity Trust requirement.

Therefore please ensure you send an email to mstrachan@ucu.org.uk providing the name and offices of the signatories as well as your reference number APP - XXXXXXXXX

Further guidance is available from Martin Smith, National Head of Resources, UCU.
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