

Help Shape Our Future!



NACO is calling on members – and non-members – to get involved in helping to shape the future of the Association.

Following the Strategic Review conducted by NACO earlier this year, the Association is now undertaking a review of its members' needs and the needs of those who are not currently members, but who may find NACO membership valuable.

"The changes we have seen in the co-operative movement in recent years have brought challenge and uncertainty to all employees," says President of NACO Jack Devers. "As a result, there has perhaps never been a better time to be a member of NACO. However, to serve our members most effectively and to

encourage new members into the Association, we must deliver what you want and need."

An important part of this review is an internet-based survey. NACO is asking all Co-operative Group managers in Role Bands 5 and above to participate, as well as all NACO graded managers throughout the movement. The survey takes just a few minutes to complete and can be accessed through the NACO website.

To find out how you can help shape our future see page 3 and for more about our Strategic Review see pages 8 and 9.

Season's Greetings!

On behalf of NACO General Council I would like to wish you a happy Christmas and a very merry New Year.

2009 has been an exciting year not only for me, being elected President of NACO, but for NACO and the co-operative movement as a whole. Although it has also been a challenging year for many people, looking ahead, I believe 2010 offers a good deal of hope.

Our Strategic Review, as the article on pages 8 and 9 explains, has enabled us to set out a vision for the future of the Association and to develop a mission that reflects our aims and aspirations within today's co-operative movement and the wider mutual

sector. As you can see from the article above, we would now appreciate your help with our survey. *(Continued on page 3.)*

Jack Devers
President



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Neil Buist, General Secretary

Welcome

2009 has been a watershed year in many ways. The global economy hit rock bottom and in the UK we have experienced the longest recession since records began. However, the economic problems have ignited a debate about the future the likes of which we haven't seen for a generation, with many people genuinely looking for an alternative – and better – way of doing things.

For the co-operative movement in the UK, 2009 was much more positive. We were catapulted back into the top five food retailers, with the Co-operative Group's acquisition of Somerfield, and the merger of Co-operative Financial Services with Britannia created an ethical financial institution to be reckoned with. In fact, for the movement as a whole, it has generally been a positive year, despite very difficult trading conditions and, sadly, one or two casualties along the way, such as Dairy Farmers of Britain.

I am sure 2009 will be remembered as a landmark for our sector – not only in terms of performance, but also as the year that co-operation and mutuality got back onto the radar as a 'better way of doing business'. Some people say that co-operatives do best when times are hardest. The challenge for us is to build upon the resurgence of interest in our business model during the recent crisis and embed our philosophy into the fabric of the British economy for years to come.

For NACO, 2009 has been a time of reflection and rejuvenation. The changes we have seen in the movement have inevitably led us to reassess our own role and purpose, and our Strategic Review, completed earlier this year, as well as the survey we are now undertaking, will provide the impetus and direction for the Association for the future. We'd urge you to take a few minutes to complete this survey.

I am sure 2010 will have its fair share of challenges, but for many of us in the movement it offers a good deal of hope and optimism. Of course, working through a period of upheaval, good or bad, is never easy and I am sure many of us feel we have been expected to go the extra mile for our employers in the past year or so. Perhaps this hasn't always been comfortable for us, but when we see the positive results of our combined efforts, we should take a step back and remember we are part of a team, working for a common good, and that our individual labours really do matter. I am sure our employers appreciate that commitment too.

Whatever next year throws at you – good or bad – it's worth trying to keep things in perspective. Remember what's important in your life and make the most of the time you spend with those near and dear to you.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year!

Developing NACO for the Future: A Survey for All Managers

NACO is calling on members and non-members to get involved in helping to shape the future of the Association by participating in an online survey.

The current economic climate is a challenging time for all businesses, and that includes those in the co-operative and mutual sectors. The current developments within the Co-operative Group, for example, are truly exciting and provide significant opportunities for those working within the Group. However, the changes also bring a great deal of challenge and uncertainty to employees. As a result, there has perhaps never been a more valuable time for non-members to consider membership of NACO.

"Within NACO we need to reflect on the changing needs of our membership and those who would consider membership," explains President Jack Devers. "Therefore, we are undertaking a review of

our members' needs, and the needs of all those within the co-operative and mutual sectors who may find NACO membership of value."

An important part of this review is a survey which the Association is carrying out using a cost-effective internet method. NACO will be asking all Co-operative Group managers in Role Bands 5 and above to participate, as well as all NACO graded managers throughout the movement. The survey will take just a few minutes to complete.

There are some questions specifically for current NACO members, and other questions for those who are in NACO recognised roles but who are not currently members of NACO.

"We are hoping non-members will tell us how NACO can help managers in the Group and that existing members will let us know how well NACO performs in their opinion," explains Jack.

"Although we ask for some personal information to help us categorise results, all responses are totally confidential and we will not be able to identify individual responses.

"However, we are keen to encourage participation in the survey, and as a consequence there is a field to complete your email address and we will enter all of those that complete this section into a prize draw to win a flat screen television – there will be one prize for NACO members and one for non-members."

To take part in the survey please go to www.naco.coop and follow the links on the home page. NACO would ask members to pass this information on to non-members too.

Anyone interested in finding out more about what NACO can do for them should contact the Association on 0161 351 7900, email info@nacoco-op.org or simply visit the website www.naco.coop.

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Season's Greetings! (continued from front page)

On behalf of NACO General Council I would like to wish you a happy Christmas and a very merry New Year.

In the last 12 months, the co-operative model has been rediscovered by many people as a better alternative to the traditional company set-up. With their ethical attitude to business, co-operatives offer a more inclusive and responsive approach than shareholder-led plcs. Some would go as far as to say that our movement is experiencing something of a

renaissance. The exceptional performance of the Co-operative Group and many other co-operative societies in the past year helps to justify this claim and I am sure we can build upon this success in months to come.

Once again this year, NACO will not be sending Christmas cards. Those who know me may think that, as a Scotsman, my arms have got shorter and my pockets deeper. I can assure you this is not the case, but we think that making a donation to the



value of the cost of the cards to our Charity of the Year, the Parkinson's Disease Society, is more worthwhile.

I hope you enjoy your Christmas and New Year celebrations.

All the very best for 2010!

**Jack Devers
President**

Proud to Set the Standard: CFSMA Conference 2009

This year's Co-operative Funeral Service Managers' Association (CFSMA) conference took place at the Hilton Hotel in Newcastle from Friday 16th to Sunday 18th October. The theme of the event was 'Proud to Set the Standard' and delegates from across the UK participated in three days of discussion, debate and decision-making.

Speakers included Dr Brian Parsons, Editor of the Funeral Service Journal, who traced the history and development of co-operative funerals and Jackie Lanham, Director of Resourcing and Development at the Co-operative Group, who discussed how to become an employer of choice. Warrant Officer Class 1 Dave Hosie looked at values and standards in the British Army; Mark Fitzmaurice from Dale Carnegie Training spoke about team engagement and motivation and Professor Gervase Phinn, a well known author and public speaker, took a light hearted look at 'setting the standard'.

In his address to the conference, National President of the CFSMA Phil Hoggarth set out the



Phil Hoggarth

challenges and opportunities for the Association and the importance of setting standards.

"Don't let the best you have done so far be the standard you set for the rest of your life. It's time to raise the bar and continue to be 'proud to set the standard'," he said.

Phil explained that, since the CFSMA began to implement its Strategic Review a year ago, the Association has seen a unified agenda being implemented throughout its divisions and that plans are progressing for changes to the Association's conference structure.

He went on to highlight the renaissance of the co-operative movement that is taking place and the impact this will have on the CFSMA.

"The Co-operative Group now represents about 80% of our membership and if we add to that the Affiliated, the Associate and the Honorary members that leaves the remaining societies being responsible for only 5% of the membership," said Phil. "This is a shocking but true fact that cannot be ignored and, as part of our strategic planning, the CFSMA has started to put in place changes to develop a central conferencing structure to utilise this strength."

Addressing the resurgence of the Co-operative brand and new thinking on advertising funerals, which was once frowned upon, Phil added: "If we are to survive, we must embrace change and evolve with it."

On the Sunday of the conference, the new President for 2009/10



Steve Carty

Steve Carty was installed. Steve is Regional Manager for Glasgow and has been with the Co-operative Group for 20 years. He has been involved with the CFSMA for nine years.

In his installation acceptance, Steve set out his theme for the year: 'Leadership, Building for the Future'. "When I began my career in management, I came across a phrase that has remained with me: 'Management is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right things'."

Steve explained that an understanding of leadership is, in his view, key to preparing businesses for the future. "My intention over the next year is to progress the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be not only a manager but a leader. By identifying this, it prepares us for the challenges ahead, allowing us to lead our businesses effectively into the future."

Next year's CFSMA conference will be held at New Century House in Manchester on Friday 17th and Saturday 18th September, following on from the Funeralcare conference. The theme will be 'Leadership, Building for the Future'.

Group's New Head Office Will Be 'Good for Everyone'

Senior management at The Co-operative Group are promising staff that the new head office, planned to open in Manchester in 2012, will be 'good for everyone'.

"It's a bold claim to make," Group Chief Executive, Peter Marks told NACO, "but we are committed to using the building to express our values as a business."

The new building, to be sited on the current Miller Street NCP car park, is aiming for the highest possible standards of environmental sustainability. Tackling climate change has become a central commitment for the Group and the new office is intended to be a powerful and long-term statement of that intent.

But creating a 'green-friendly' building is just one aspect of what will make the new head office 'good for everyone'. Improving the working environment for staff and the opportunities for introducing new and more flexible ways of working are also central to the plans. Peter Marks admits that in some ways the Group has an old fashioned work culture: "We still have lots of individual offices, limited collaboration by and between teams and a culture that puts too much emphasis on time spent in the office rather than the outputs being achieved. If we are going to build a modern, effective workforce, we have to start changing our ways of working."

The introduction of new technology will also be key to success and a series of pilots will soon be underway to test how well teams can adapt to different ways of working together. Amanda Jones, Head of Business Change



and Transformation for the project, is quick to acknowledge that one size will not fit all.

"For many people working at a desk in an office Monday to Friday is both what they want and what the business needs and that's just as it should be. But for a significant number, being able to work more effectively on the move, at other business locations, at home, or in different parts of the new building will be a huge bonus both for business productivity and achieving a better work-life balance. But we will not be forcing this on anyone, it's about what works best for individuals, their teams and the business."

Lynda Shillaw, as Managing Director of The Co-operative

Estates, is leading the overall programme and believes listening to staff and keeping them well-informed of progress will be essential.

"We intend to take a leadership position on many aspects of this new building from the way it's constructed to how we will work together once it's our new home. As well as keeping people informed of progress, I want to ensure that all colleagues feel involved in the process so they can help shape the changes we are making, especially when it comes to more flexible working patterns. We want to get this building right and consulting with staff will be an important way to ensure we achieve that aim."

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Golf Day Fundraising Success



Individual overall winner Kevin Lyus receives his trophy from Jack Devers



Nearest the pin winner Annette Benson with NACO President Jack Devers

NACO President Jack Devers organised a charity golf day at Morley Hayes Golf Club in Derbyshire on 3rd September and over £6,500 was raised for his chosen charity, the Parkinson's Disease Society.

Over 60 people took part in the competition, which took place over 18 holes on a blustery early autumn day, and a number of prizes were awarded.

The individual overall prize went to Kevin Lyus, Shirebrook Co-operative Store Manager, who was presented with the NACO President's Trophy by Jack Devers. Kevin was also amongst the winners for the team prize,

along with Rob Bentley and Craig Swift, Team Leaders at Co-operative Retail Logistics (CRL) Alfreton Depot, and Callum Flinton, Forest Town Co-operative Store Manager.

The 'longest drive' competition was won by Barry Pattison, Shift Manager at Nottingham Depot, and Annette Benson, Team Leader at Alfreton Depot, took the prize for being 'nearest the pin'. Shaun Henderson, Night Shift Team Leader at Alfreton Depot, won the putting competition.

"I was delighted with the amount of interest in the golf day and pleased that we were able to raise so much money," says Jack Devers. "We had a great time and

I would like to thank everyone who participated."

NACO would like to thank all those organisations that sponsored holes, made donations or provided raffle and other prizes. This included: CFS, Britannia, The Co-operative Travel, Sunwin Motors, Lincolnshire Co-operative Society, Midlands Co-op, The Co-operative Group Food, The Co-operative Group HR, Chelmsford Star Society, Funeralcare, Seaton Valley Co-op, Hartshornes and Best Connection. The Association would also like to thank Paul Cleminson for taking the photos. The NACO President's Charity Golf Day will take place once again in 2010 (dates to be announced).

The Co-operative Group and Somerfield: Integration Update

NACO has undertaken a series of detailed consultations to facilitate the integration of Somerfield with the Group that commenced as far back as August.

The integration has impacted all areas of Food Retail, with the challenge of developing the appropriate structures to support the increased portfolio of branches. The coming together of the Co-operative Group and

Somerfield has created a huge opportunity to strengthen the position of the co-operative movement in the grocery food sector.

The net result is a very positive one, with over 240 new roles created to provide the infrastructure for the enlarged Food Retail division. However, the integration proposals have also included significant changes in order to create a structure fit to drive long term growth in

sales and profitability. This has meant that a number of roles that previously featured in the structures have either ceased or changed significantly.

"The individual consultations continue and NACO continues to represent the interests of members impacted by the changes, both at an individual and collective level," explains Neil Buist. "Anyone wanting to discuss their individual case should contact the NACO Head Office."

Meet Your Officials: Lynne Higginbottom



Lynne Higginbottom

Lynne Higginbottom is NACO's Finance and Administration Officer. Lynne has worked at the Association for almost seven years and is the linchpin of their day-to-day operations.

Lynne is a qualified financial accountant and her role involves a wide range of accountancy responsibilities. In addition, her administration duties include everything from organising events and seminars, liaising with co-operative societies and co-ordinating NACO's Benevolent Fund report for the Charity Commission, to managing payroll, pensions and other back-office functions for the Association.

Before joining NACO, Lynne worked at a number of companies in the North West, which did a range of things including engineering and twine and thread manufacturing. Her most recent position before joining NACO was with a US company which manufactured adhesives, where she worked for four years. Lynne's role involved a lot of travelling, as the company's European headquarters were in Zurich.

When Lynne's job function was moved to Germany, she faced the prospect of redundancy and so decided to look around for something else. It was pure chance that she saw an advert for the job at NACO.

Like many people who are new to the sector, Lynne didn't know a lot about the co-operative movement when she first started. However, a couple of really useful courses run by the Co-operative College soon opened her eyes to it all.

"The courses I did were invaluable and I'd highly recommend them to anyone new to the movement – or anyone who just wants to find out more," says Lynne.

One of Lynne's biggest achievements at NACO was to oversee the implementation of a new membership system.

"When I started at NACO, we had an old DOS-based system which provided very little scope for managing data and wouldn't even handle email addresses," explains

"Working at NACO is more than just a job, it's like being part of a family."

Lynne. "For the 1,800 members who had their subscriptions deducted from their salary each month, I had to manually pull information off the system and prepare each and every one individually!"

Lynne did a lot of research into what the new system should look like and helped to make sure it was tailored to NACO's requirements.

"The new system really paid off," says Lynne. "Not only does it

help us handle our membership efficiently but it enables us to manage events and it ties in with our accounting systems too."

When members phone up NACO, Lynne is often the first person they speak to. Lynne believes that an important part of her job, as with all the officials, is being there to listen and help people, often when they need it most.

"I've had members phone up in tears, unable to speak because they've been so distressed, but we do what we can to help and people appreciate that."

Working at NACO is more than just a job, says Lynne, it's like being part of a family. "Most of us have worked together for quite a long time and although we are often very busy, it's a nice working environment and we all get on well."

When she's not with her NACO family, Lynne can be found at home in Mossley, Tameside, with her real family – her husband, two daughters aged 12 and 5, and a

King Charles spaniel. Lynne says her daughters are very keen on dancing – both tap and ballet – and, as a registered chaperone, she is often called upon to look after the children in the dance groups and transport them to and fro, especially when they are performing in shows.

Lynne concludes: "My weekends can be busy too!"

A Vision for the Future

Earlier this year the Association completed its Strategic Review. This was a very thorough process which saw NACO literally starting from scratch in considering what its purpose should be within a co-operative movement of the size and shape it is today, what its priorities should be, how it should be structured and how it can remain financially sustainable.

The first thing NACO addressed was its Vision for the future. That is, “to be a strong, independent Trade Union, focused on meeting members’ needs and aspirations”. Next came the Mission Statement, which was agreed as, “to provide effective, professional representation – both individually and collectively – to an engaged and vibrant membership”.

The Vision and Mission Statement are underpinned by six strategic objectives.

Strategic objectives

- 1) To represent members’ aspirations and provide a professional collective bargaining agenda through appropriate channels and timescales
- 2) To provide a timely response to all requests from individual members to provide professional and effective representational support for internal casework
- 3) To provide services to support the Association’s democratic structures and to provide effective communication channels to ensure members are actively engaged in the management and strategic direction of the Association

- 4) To ensure the financial stability of the Association through effective management of the financial resources and seek to build upon the reserves and assets
- 5) To actively recruit new members to the Association from the co-operative and mutual sectors to provide for a net increase in NACO membership
- 6) To effectively manage the resources – human, property, vehicles and technology – to facilitate an appropriate provision of services to members whilst balancing work/life commitments in a safe working environment.

The strategic objectives are supported by 37 operational objectives agreed with NACO officials. Rather than detailing each one individually, the objectives have been grouped under six sub-headings and an overview of these is provided below.

Operational objectives

Developing membership opportunities

NACO has completed a mapping exercise of membership databases in the independent societies and CFS to identify recruitment opportunities. This has led to a concentrated campaign in CFS which is having significant success. The mapping of the Group is ongoing, but the Association is identifying “hot spots” where it is concentrating efforts.

NACO has completed a review of mutual building societies and insurance organisations and has held some informal meetings with umbrella organisations supporting these sectors. The Association

also continues to review opportunities in Somerfield and Britannia and has had a series of meetings with the Britannia Staff Union, which represents colleagues in the former Britannia Building Society.

Resources

The Association has reviewed its investment portfolio and, in order to maximise income streams, has taken action to move out of low yield cash holdings such as money markets, and transferred into preference share holdings and high yield investment trusts. NACO remains mindful at all times that the investment strategy must remain a low/medium risk to fulfil its role as custodians of members’ monies.

NACO has explored new income streams including selling advertising space in *co-operative official* and Fairtrade projects, which have realised returns for the Association. Further research is being undertaken for other income streams including property investment and ethical auditing processes.

The Association has continued to monitor expenditure closely with reviews of the NACO registered office, vehicles, green energy and grants all being undertaken to ensure the Association explores every opportunity to save money whilst providing a level of service expected by the membership. A full review of all the current technology used, both in terms of software and hardware, is ongoing, in order to assess suitability and replacement strategy.

NACO profile

The Association is looking to engage with members and non-members in the Co-operative

Group, and hopefully CFS, in early December through an electronic distribution of *co-operative official*. Agreements are in place for this to be sent to every individual undertaking a NACO graded role and will raise the profile with members and non-members alike. The electronic message will also have a link to a survey (see page 3), with separate links for members and non-members.

Membership engagement and communication

NACO is reviewing the current transparency and availability of contacting members, including the use of its website, electronic newsletters, text messaging and so on. The Association has completed a full scale review of the induction processes in the Co-operative Group and will undertake presentations to every intake to maximise recruitment at the earliest stage of an individual’s career with the co-operative movement. This exercise is to be rolled out to all independent societies and CFS at the earliest opportunity.

The NACO membership induction process has been modified to ensure that greater explanation of NACO benefits are included and details of the democratic structures of the Association

are available with a view to increasing active members. The strategy for membership engagement will be further enhanced by market research.

A diversity questionnaire was issued to all members by the Diversity Committee in early 2009 and this has been a great success with 650 responses received, providing an excellent database of information. This is currently being reviewed by the Diversity Committee in conjunction with the Co-operative College.

Partnership

This is a longer term operational and strategic objective for the Association and falls into three main areas:

1. Building strategic relationships within the co-operative and mutual sectors with existing partners and new partners
2. Entering into formalised Partnership Agreements with existing and new stakeholders
3. Entering into formal Change Management Agreements with existing and new stakeholders.

People

General Council has commissioned a full review of the NACO Rule Book and this is currently being drafted. Alongside this, NACO internal

structures, succession planning, staff handbook and performance management systems have all been subject to review.

Important exercise

“This has been an important exercise to ensure that NACO remains a viable and relevant trade union which continues to represent the interests of its members in an evolving co-operative sector,” says President Jack Devers. “The amalgamations and mergers we have witnessed over the past few years have required a careful review of the NACO structures and strategies to ensure we can continue to deliver the level of service required, and expected, by our members on a collective and individual basis.

“The last few years have thrown many challenges at NACO and the future will no doubt be just as challenging. Through the activity undertaken so far, and our strategic plans for the future, I believe NACO is well placed to continue to provide the support to members it has shown for the last 90 plus years.”

For more information about the Strategic Review contact NACO on 0161 351 7900, email info@nacoco-op.org or visit www.nacocoop.org.

Ten reasons to join NACO

- Negotiation with your society for ongoing improvements in your terms and conditions
- Advice on individual contracts of employment
- Representation at grievance and disciplinary cases
- Support for members’ specific requirements during the ongoing changing business climate
- Provision of expert legal advice and representation
- Cost-free personal injury service with no deductions from any compensation awards
- Training courses and career development opportunities
- Detailed up-to-date employment advice
- Financial support in times of need
- Access to a range of optional benefits where NACO has relationships with a variety of providers, including reduced rate utility and phone providers, tax advice, conveyancing and will-writing services.

Co-operative Group Management Agreement 2010

NACO has submitted the following claim to the Co-operative Group for the review of the Management Agreement, effective from the beginning of Period 4, 2010.

- A variable pay pot to increase salaries of Role Bands 1 to 4 of 3.0%
- The variable pay matrix and distribution guidelines for Role Bands 1 to 4 to be subject to consultation with NACO
- A flat rate increase to salaries for Role Band 5 managers of 3.0%
- A discretionary bonus for Role Band 5 managers to reflect the 2009 performance based on an overall budget of 5.0% of salaries
- The introduction of an Annual Incentive Scheme for Role Band 5 managers providing for a maximum of 7.5% of salary and subject to the same scheme rules and criteria as detailed for Role Bands 1 to 4 Annual Incentive Schemes payable in 2011 based on 2010 performance.

In preparing the claim for 2010, NACO and the Co-operative Group Council have taken into account the ongoing financial crisis, which has impacted very heavily on the UK economy, and that for the first time in many years the country has faced a prolonged period of negative inflation. However, analysts predict that inflation will rise sharply at the end of 2009 to around 2.5% in January (when VAT will be reinstated at 17.5%) and will continue to rise during 2010. According to the latest predictions from Incomes Data Services, the Retail Price Index (RPI) will exceed 3.0% by the second quarter of 2010 and



remain around that level for the rest of the year.

Since the 2009 review of salaries for the NACO population, the Co-operative Group has witnessed excellent performance. The headlines for the 2008 trading year-end were as follows:

- Gross sales up 15% to £10.435 billion
- Revenue up 13% to £9.399 billion
- Operating profit (before significant items) up 11% to £393 million
- Operating profit (after significant items) up 60% to £275 million
- Like for like sales growth in food exceeded the market for the twelfth consecutive quarter.

The 2009 interim performance results continue in a similar positive vein:

- Group revenues up 27% to £6.4 billion
- Like for like food sales up by 7.3% (market beating)
- Group operating profit (before significant items) up 33% to £294.4 million

- Like for like sales growth in food exceeded the market for the fourteenth consecutive quarter
- £650 million raised through store disposals.

“During negotiations for the 2009 review, NACO was advised by the Group that whilst a retrospective review of RPI figures was an important factor, in so much as it portrayed the increase or decrease in the value of take home pay, it was also important to review the prospects for RPI going forward, in order to account for a budgetary process,” explains Neil Buist.

“Therefore, our claim for 2010 takes into account the expected increase in RPI to over 3% by the second quarter of next year, as well as the settlement reached in 2009 and the excellent ongoing performance of the Group under the stewardship of the NACO management population.”

NACO and the Co-operative Group Council are keen to reach an agreement with the Group in advance of the review date and are looking forward to the Group’s response.

A Co-operative Approach to Funerals in South Africa

The Co-operative Funeralcare and the Co-operative Funeral Services Managers’ Association are supporting a feasibility study to look at ways to develop co-operative approaches to funeral care in South Africa. Led by the Co-operative College and its partners in South Africa, the long term aim is to help a new co-operative sector in South Africa.

Funerals in South Africa are expensive. Households spend an estimated 15 times their monthly household income on a funeral,

“The co-operative sector in South Africa is currently undergoing a period of significant growth...”

which are often large functions with extended families attending from across the country. Families often want to be able to hold an elaborate funeral for their deceased as it is considered a mark of dignity for the household and a sign of respect to the deceased.

Over 20% of South Africans are members of burial societies which provide mechanisms for savings to pay for the funeral and community support at the time of bereavement. These societies are informal, tend to be based on local communities and many are currently struggling to cope with the rising death rates due to the impact of HIV/Aids.

According to Dr Linda Shaw of the Co-operative College, who is leading the project, an important characteristic of burial societies is

that they do not require disclosure of illnesses or request medical checks before joining. “This means that burial societies accept members that would often be excluded from formal sector cover, such as HIV positive groups.”

The co-operative sector in South Africa is currently undergoing a period of significant growth and the challenge is to transform co-operatives from enterprises operating in the informal sector into formal enterprises. The UK College has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Johannesburg, which has expressed an interest in providing long term support for

the development of funeral co-operatives following the findings of the feasibility study.

“Burial societies provide perhaps one of the most important opportunities for this, but the process of change would need to be accompanied by appropriate support measures,” says Linda Shaw.

The UK co-operative movement has unique expertise in relation to funeral care which will be utilised during the study in the form of ongoing advice and exchange visits.

“Existing research has tended to focus on the social insurance aspect of informal burial societies rather than on the provision of funeral services,” explains Linda. “There has been no discussion of the potential for the development of a co-operative funeral enterprise and further research would help to develop a clearer picture of funeral cover in South Africa.”

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A home care co-operative recently established in Soweto, South Africa, with support from the Canadian Co-operative Association, working with people with HIV/AIDS. Copyright: The Canadian Co-operative Association.

Introduction of Grading Scheme to Midlands Co-operative Society

By Tracey Orr, Head of Human Resources, Midlands Co-operative Society

In 2008, we commenced a full scale review of our grading schemes. At the time, we had several grading schemes in operation, which we felt were no longer serving a fully useful purpose.

We had the NACO/KPMG scheme which was implemented nationally in 2001, but had not been updated since its introduction, a six grade scheme for our Administrative, Clerical and Supervisory population and a number of colleagues who

“Our experience to date has been wholly positive, with all parties seeing advantage in the process.”

didn't fit either description so had been left ungraded. Top to bottom, we had 11 grades and suspected that there was a fair amount of overlap between the different schemes.

In reviewing our grading schemes we had the following aims:

- To provide one grading system, which could be applied consistently to a variety of roles and jobs
- To reduce the potential of overlap and inconsistencies between schemes
- To enable comparison of jobs between different businesses, resulting in a clear picture of how roles relate to each other and therefore the ability to clearly plot career paths
- To provide a framework, which would facilitate the attachment of a variety of benefits, based on grade entitlement rather than any other criteria
- To enable the introduction of a mechanism to accurately benchmark into the market

place to ensure pay levels are competitive with the market

- To enable the introduction of performance related pay and/or variable pay at some stage in the future.

When developing our project plan, we were mindful of the fact that this is a path well travelled and that there is significant experience within the movement with regard to this subject. NACO were also right behind us and, as Neil Buist made clear during early conversations,

the introduction of formalised schemes such as these were part of their own strategic agenda.

We contacted three providers of job evaluation services and in the end engaged HAY Group to work with us. A significant advantage of using HAY Group was that the HAY methodology underpins the Co-operative Group's grading scheme, and their consultants are therefore familiar with the co-operative movement and had experience of accommodating quite different and variable jobs within the same framework.

We then commenced on the task of communicating our plan and engaging our colleagues in the process. NACO were happy to lend their support to all our communications, which no doubt smoothed the way to the scheme's introduction. Over three months we analysed all of the jobs within our 120 member NACO population, by using a combination of full benchmark job analysis and a slotting guide to place the



remainder. This was carried out by HR working with the General Management team and HAY Group.

The results of the grading were discussed with NACO, prior to distribution, and they were reassured by the logical and objective view taken of job remit and sizing. The results were communicated in summer 2009, without an appeal being registered or indeed a single phone call to NACO. Preliminary feedback seems to demonstrate that colleagues were very comfortable with the process and viewed it as both fair and credible. HAY are now working on the salary bands to attach to each grade, having benchmarked our grade descriptors against the market.

We have now moved onto our second legacy grading scheme and are currently in the process of slotting jobs into our new streamline eight grade structure.

Our experience to date has been wholly positive, with all parties seeing advantage in the process. We have a single integrated grade structure for all levels of management and colleagues and a robust and open process for determining grades at all levels within the Society. Just as importantly we have a framework for future developments with reward and benefits.

Why Give Your Personal Injury Case to the Union?

By Philip Liprot, Personal Injury Lawyer at Thompsons Solicitors



If you have an accident in or out of work or a member of your family injures themselves outside work, as a member of NACO, you (or your family member) are entitled to free legal representation from Thompsons solicitors.

Thompsons is the most experienced personal injury firm in the UK with 29 offices nationwide.

We only act for injured people and never for insurance companies or employers.

Claims companies

As a trade union, NACO is a non-profit making organisation and exists to benefit its members. By contrast, legal expenses providers and claims companies are only accountable to their shareholders and will only take a commercial view of your case. They have an overriding interest in maximising profit and avoiding unnecessary risk.

All members benefit

Some of the profit made from personal injury cases subsidises the cost of representing union members who have problems at work and may need to lodge a claim in the employment tribunal where costs are generally not awarded to the winning party. This means that all NACO members benefit from giving your personal injury case to the union.

Independent advice

Recently, car insurance companies have started contacting victims of car accidents to try to settle their claims before they take legal advice. There are many examples of insurance companies offering a couple of thousand pounds straight after an accident only for the case to be settled for substantially more than this once the injured person had obtained legal advice.

One of our clients was in a car accident and she was offered £4,000 from the insurers of the other driver. She came to us via her union and we settled her case for £35,000. There are other examples

of our clients feeling intimidated and pressurised into settling their claims before they can take independent legal advice.

Remember, if you have any kind of accident contact NACO as soon as possible so that you can discuss your case with a lawyer.



Free Legal Assistance for Members

As a member of NACO you get free legal assistance from Thompsons, the most experienced Personal Injury firm in the UK, for:

- Road traffic accidents in or out of work
- Any accident at work
- Any accident outside work (including slipping, tripping and holiday accidents)
- Assaults at work
- Industrial disease

If any member of your family is hurt in a road traffic accident, on holiday, or outside work, your NACO membership also entitles them to free legal assistance.

There is a three year time limit to get your case to Court so don't delay in getting advice!

To get legal advice simply contact Nicola Schofield at the NACO office, email ns@nacoco-op.org, with your membership number.



Remember, Thompsons only acts for injured people and will never represent employers or insurance companies.

Your NACO membership also entitles you to:

- Employment law advice
- Low cost conveyancing
- Low cost wills

Representing Members' Individual Concerns

As members will doubtless be aware, their Association not only works hard on members' behalf to collectively represent them on issues involving pay, pensions and the ongoing improvement to their terms and conditions of employment, but each year also represents members with individual concerns.

What is perhaps not universally known however, are the numbers of individual cases that NACO Officials take on. On average, individual representations by NACO number between 180 and 200 per year – approximately 8-9% of NACO's entire membership.

These representations cover a host of issues such as disciplinaries, grievances, redundancies etc and in a number of cases could lead to a member leaving the employment of their Society. Again, what is also not universally acknowledged are the amounts of compensation that are generated by such "parting of the ways".

Up until the end of September 2009, NACO had managed to earn almost £3.42 million for its members, compared with £3.23 million for the whole of 2008 and an average of £4 million per year over the last five years. By the end of 2009, experience shows that the final figure will rise still higher.

Bob Lister, Assistant Secretary, says: "Without the input and expertise of NACO Officials, members could be leaving employment with far less than we can negotiate on their behalf, and non-members would probably not be aware of how to start formal negotiations with their employer in the first instance."

The message is clear: being a NACO member has many benefits – not only for day-to-day issues, but also for the advice and support the Association can offer a member throughout their career.

CFS and Britannia Integration: Latest News

The merger between Co-operative Financial Services (CFS) and the Britannia Group was effective from 1 August 2009.

The initial stages of the merger to create the senior management team were implemented very quickly with Levels A & B, the Chief Executive and Executive team, announced in advance. This was quickly followed by Level C announcements, effectively the Top 40 managers within the business.

Following on from this, consultation has taken place for the Level D management of which there were approximately 300 managers in scope for circa 180 roles available. The final stages of consultation on this management population took place in November. The joint trade unions (NACO, USDAW, Unite and the Britannia Staff Union) have worked closely during the past few months to ensure a fairness and consistency for all of the members in scope to the consultations. The next phase of consultation will commence over the forthcoming

weeks. This will involve the vast bulk of the population of the former CFS and Britannia personnel to drive the business forward and provide the structures required to enable the vision of becoming the UK's most admired financial services provider.

Neil Buist says: "NACO will continue to represent members through the joint trade union consultations and on an individual basis where required. Any members who wish to discuss their personal cases should contact the NACO Head Office."

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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NACO has made every effort to ensure that the information in this magazine is correct, but we cannot accept responsibility for any omissions or errors. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of NACO.

Editorial co-ordination by Ethos public relations - www.ethos-pr.com

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NACO's Latest Member Benefit Could Save You Hundreds!

You could save more than your NACO annual subs by trying Union Energy's new energy price comparison service. Union members using the service between June and October 2009 saved up to £753.05 on their domestic gas and electricity bills, with average savings of £206.55 per person.

Not only could you make instant savings by using this free service, but if you register for Union Energy's Ongoing Monitoring Programme, you will benefit from cheaper energy prices for the long term. As soon as prices in the industry change and you can save the amount you have specified, Union Energy will contact you to let you know.

Unlike most other energy price comparison sites, Union Energy is completely impartial and includes tariffs for every energy company active in the UK market for maximum choice. Customers therefore have all options available to them, be it standard gas and electricity paid by direct debit, single fuels, green energy, capped rate products etc, supplied by smaller niche energy companies as well as 'the big six'.

Union Energy is owned by the TUC and its service is powered by

Energylinx, a UK company with an excellent track record.

So what are you waiting for? Go to www.unionenergy.co.uk or call 0800 094 9039 to find out how much you could save.



Switch & save!



Introducing the new energy price comparison service for trade union members

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 Ongoing 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 union members have already saved hundreds of pounds each. Go on, give it a try!

Visit www.unionenergy.co.uk or call 0800 094 9039

(Mon-Thurs 9am-6pm; Fri 9am-4pm; Sat 9am-1pm)

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