

## This Major U.K. Trade Union Works with BlackBerry for Its Mobility Needs



### The Organization

Founded in 1993, UNISON is the second largest trade union in the United Kingdom. Headquartered in London, it supports nearly 1.3 million professionals in sectors including local government, education, healthcare, emergency services, and transportation. Its staff and volunteers assist with everything from pay and workplace conditions to legal advice, while also running local campaigns for both recruitment and publicity.

### UNISON

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**Industry:**

Public Sector

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**Employees:**

1,300

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**Location:**

United Kingdom

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**Product:**

BlackBerry® Enterprise  
Mobility Suite - Collaboration Edition,  
BlackBerry® UEM,  
BlackBerry® Work,  
BlackBerry® Secure Connect Plus

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**Website:**

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

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## The Challenge

"At any given time, approximately 50% of our staff are out of the office," explains Laurence Arterton, UNISON's head of Client Support and ICT Services. "UNISON's representatives travel quite frequently, as one might expect in their line of work. They're often out doing recruitment activities, handling negotiations for members, and hosting meetings across a range of topics."

These employees needed to be able to keep in touch with one another and work seamlessly and effectively while in the field. Since most of UNISON's staff found it too frustrating to carry around a heavy laptop, smartphones were the clear solution. However, UNISON's IT team quickly realised that securing those smartphones could represent a major roadblock.

"People had to be properly productive out of the office via email, contacts, calendar access, and corporate intranet access," Arterton continues. "But we also needed to ensure the data they worked with was kept safe."

The trade union stores and manages a wide variety of data and has a duty of care to keep this data safe. For some members, this might simply be personal details. Others, however, might provide the trade union with healthcare information. It might store case notes as part of legal arbitration.

"Because UNISON is a trade union, the data of our members is both highly-sensitive and subject to data protection laws," Arterton explains. "In the United Kingdom, we're regarded as working with a special category of data, one which requires even more careful handling than just personal information. Protecting this data is our key priority with every IT initiative."

## The Solution

A BlackBerry customer since around 2007, UNISON originally chose BlackBerry® Enterprise Server (BES®) because it provided security and functionality offered by no other MDM platform on the market. It was, recalls Arterton, well ahead of the competition. The trade union has been a BlackBerry customer ever since, updating its infrastructure as BlackBerry's portfolio has evolved; today, it supports a fleet of approximately 1100 Android™ devices.

"It's been an evolution, just keeping up with releases to make sure we don't get too far behind," says Arterton. "We underwent quite a fast migration from BES10 to BlackBerry® UEM. We've been staying abreast of the latest version since then."

BlackBerry partner Appurity has been instrumental in helping UNISON achieve this.

"Appurity has a high level of technical knowledge pertaining to the BlackBerry platform – it's why we were introduced to them," Arterton recalls. "They have helped us manage both our BlackBerry solutions and our Exchange hosting. When we moved to UEM, we decided we wanted to partner with them directly."

Working with Appurity, UNISON has deployed the [BlackBerry® Enterprise Mobility Suite – Collaboration Edition](#), designed to help businesses mobilise content, deploy leading business apps, and deliver enhanced collaboration.

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"We don't know what regulation will follow the GDPR, but we're confident in our position. BlackBerry, Appurity, and Android Enterprise helped us a great deal with GDPR compliance, so issues with any upcoming regulatory frameworks are highly unlikely. "

- Laurence Arterton,

*Head of Client Support and ICT Services, UNISON*

This gives the organisation access to BlackBerry® UEM, a powerful endpoint management platform that supports a wide range of deployment models and operating systems. For enterprise email, calendar, and contacts, it has [BlackBerry® Work](#), a robust productivity tool. Finally, there's BlackBerry® Secure Connect Plus, a component of BlackBerry UEM that enables secure, VPN-less connectivity. UNISON uses this alongside an enterprise-managed version of the Chrome browser on Android to allow its staff to access a wide range of extranet apps, as well as the databases on which it stores customer information.

## The Results

**Seamless Regulatory Compliance:** In many organisations, mobility is something of a blind spot, with IT unable to map the flow of data between devices. UNISON could not afford to be one such enterprise, particularly in light of regulations such as the GDPR. BlackBerry UEM helps ensure they are not, offering full visibility into and control over every endpoint it manages – without the need for additional consulting or extra software. This helps UNISON comply with the accountability principle of the GDPR. The law also requires organisations to use appropriate technical or organisational measures to keep personal data secure. BlackBerry UEM is the ideal platform to do this.

“Because BlackBerry has always been a secure platform, we were very pleased to know that we didn't have to introduce any additional security for the GDPR,” Arterton explains. “There were other areas of our business where we had to make quite substantial changes, but not around the use of mobile devices. BlackBerry has always had security at the core of what it delivers.”

**An Intuitive, Familiar Platform:** UNISON has worked with BlackBerry for nearly a decade. Though BlackBerry's software portfolio has grown significantly in that time, its solutions are still both easy to use and familiar to IT staff. This, notes Arterton, is a major draw for the organisation.

“From BES10 onwards, we've been happy with the functionality BlackBerry provides,” Arterton recalls. “The ease with which we can create and modify policies on the BlackBerry UEM server, the visibility BlackBerry provides into connected devices, and the fact that everything is both streamlined and simple to understand are all considerable benefits.”

**The Flexibility to Support Any Use Case:** Security aside, one of UNISON's goals was ensuring staff did not have to carry more than a single device while in the workplace. As such, it relies on a corporate-owned, personally enabled (COPE) deployment model. However, there are also some employees who prefer using their own smartphones for work.

BlackBerry UEM ensures that UNISON can seamlessly support both groups, without sacrificing security or usability for either.

“There are a few people on our IT team who prefer their own make and model of smartphone,” notes Arterton. “All users get the same UEM client. There is no difference in features or security between a BYOD device or a COPE device.”



## Why Appurity?

The prevalence of mobile devices in all industry sectors, whether iOS, Android, macOS or Windows 10, is driving change in business process; Appurity is helping organizations deliver mobile initiatives that improve productivity and empower their employees. Appurity's focus on mobile device security and app delivery ensures that our clients are provided with best of breed, secure solutions.

Appurity are top-tier BlackBerry Platinum Partners with many years' experience in design and delivery of UEM, the first U.K. accredited partner for BlackBerry® Workspaces and also deliver BlackBerry® AtHoc® crisis management solutions to its customers.

Other services include Mobile Managed Services (MMS) where Appurity assists customers with device security, activation with UEM, delivery to end-user, and workshops if training is required.

**Android Secured:** “Where choosing our mobile OS was concerned, Android Enterprise was a no-brainer,” says Arterton. “Not only were most of our staff familiar with it already, it was also the best fit from a usability standpoint. The partnership between Google and BlackBerry has further helped enable Android to be highly secure on UEM.”

**Future Plans:** Currently, UNISON is evaluating a deployment of BlackBerry® AtHoc®, a crisis communication, emergency notification, and staff accountability platform. With AtHoc, the trade union would be able to fulfill a duty of care to both staff and members during a crisis. Additionally, Arterton has indicated the trade union is considering the app to communicate non-emergency messages outside regular business hours.

“Our head office is located in central London,” explains Arterton. “It’s always been in a high-risk category because of its geographical location. We work with police and local business communities to keep abreast of what’s going on and have various police advisors regularly come in to talk about current threat levels and how we might address them.”

“AtHoc would allow us to get a message – any message we need to deliver – to whoever we need to contact, whether that’s union members, event attendees, staff, or lone workers,” he continues, “even if they don’t have an officially-supplied device.”

UNISON is also examining how it might address the challenge of securing volunteers who might be using devices provided by their employers rather than by the trade union.

“Regulation like the GDPR has required us to understand a great deal more about the flow of data through our workforce,” says Arterton. “Volunteers are a challenge, as we don’t always have control over the security on their devices. We’re currently looking at bringing those people into a more standardised way of working that we can control and secure.”

For more information, visit [BlackBerry.com/Spark](https://BlackBerry.com/Spark) and follow [@BlackBerrySpark](https://twitter.com/BlackBerrySpark) on Twitter.

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“We are happy with BlackBerry. The intuitive nature of their platform, its ability to support every device, and its high security are all the encouragement we need to stick with it.”

- Laurence Arterton,  
Head of Client Support and ICT  
Services, UNISON

## About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry’s vision is clear – to secure a connected future you can trust.

For more information, visit [BlackBerry.com](https://BlackBerry.com) and follow [@BlackBerry](https://twitter.com/BlackBerry).

