

MEDIA RELEASE – Regional version

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PUTTING FACES BEHIND THE CALLS

Unicom supports photography students aims to personalize call centers

www.unicomimages.co.uk

STOCKPORT College photography student Katie Peach is revealing the personalities from the call centre industry by putting faces to the people behind the calls.

As part of her end of year project, Katie has worked in partnership with local telecoms provider Unicom to create a book giving an insight, through photography, to the call centre world and the people who work within it.

Recent reports estimate five per cent of the UK population work in call centres. Unicom employ 500 people throughout the UK, 250 of which are based at their head office in Manchester. Over the past few months Katie has regularly visited Unicom's headquarters on Sharston Industrial Estate, interviewing and photographing staff from various customer servicing teams.

"I used to work in a call centre and thought it would be interesting to give an insight into what it is like in that environment. I wanted to give a personality to the people we speak to on the other end of the phone." said Katie, who is working towards a degree in Documentary and Fine Art Photography.

"Having worked in call centres myself, I expected the staff to have only worked there for a short period of time as call centres are notorious for their high staff turnover. I was really surprised to find employees at Unicom have often worked there for over 5 years and all the staff I spoke to really enjoyed life in the call centre.

"I photographed both employees and their desks, giving an insight into people's characters and creating a photographic documentary telling their story. It has been a really interesting project and fun getting to know the Unicom team."

Chris Earle, operations director at Unicom, oversaw the project and said: "When Katie approached us with her photography project idea, we were only too happy to help. Katie's project was made possible by our Community Support Scheme which offers funding and support for community groups around our 10 regional offices. In this case we donated our time and resources to help Katie complete her project.

“The portraits of Unicom staff Katie has taken are great. This project has provided a talking point for staff who have really enjoyed playing their part.”

Unicom's Community Support Scheme invites applications from community groups which help disadvantaged people, promote sport and the arts, support education and help the environment. If you would like to apply log onto www.switchingon.com/communitysupport and fill in the online application form.

Log onto Unicom's website www.switchingon.com to view Katie's completed project.

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About Unicom

www.switchingon.com

Unicom, a trading name of Universal Utilities PLC, is a telecommunications service provider specialising in the small business market. It currently provides telecom, broadband, mobile and website services to 85,000 small businesses throughout the UK. Unicom has an annual turnover of over £50m, and employs 500 people at its 10 regional offices situated around the UK.

Unicom has attracted its business customers by offering discounts of up to 60% off BT's prices, at the same time as keeping customers on the BT network. Unicom currently supplies in excess of 450 million minutes of call time to its customers each year. Unicom differentiates itself by offering a high standard of personal customer service, with no premium rate 0845 or 0870 numbers, no recorded messages or menus, and no overseas call centres. Unicom boasts one of the highest customer retention rates in the industry.

Unicom's mobile customers only pay for the calls and services they actually use, the package also offers one complete bill and one contact number for all telecoms services.

Unicom has a directory enquiry service, 118 777. Based on calls from a BT or Unicom telephone line, 118 777 is 35% cheaper than 118 118, and 53% cheaper than 118 500. Calls from other networks may vary.

Unicom was ranked 26th in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 listings in April 2006, 89th in the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 index in December 2006 and 96th in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 listings in April 2007. In September 2007 it achieved a ranking of 95th, and in September 2008 a ranking of 88th, in the Sunday Times Microsoft Tech Track 100 index.

In October 2009 Unicom became ISO 9001:2008 certified and in 2009 was also awarded the Customer Service Excellence, the Customer First and the Investors in People certification by independent assessors.

For the year ending April 2010, Unicom reported pre-tax profits of £12.7m on a turnover of £50.5m (with profits up 11.8% and turnover up 13.5% from April 2009). Unicom expects profits to be in excess of £15m on a turnover of more than £55m for the current year.

Unicom is a patron company of The Outward Bound Trust.

For further information and photographs contact Emma at RMS PR, email emma@rmspr.co.uk or call 0161 927 3131.