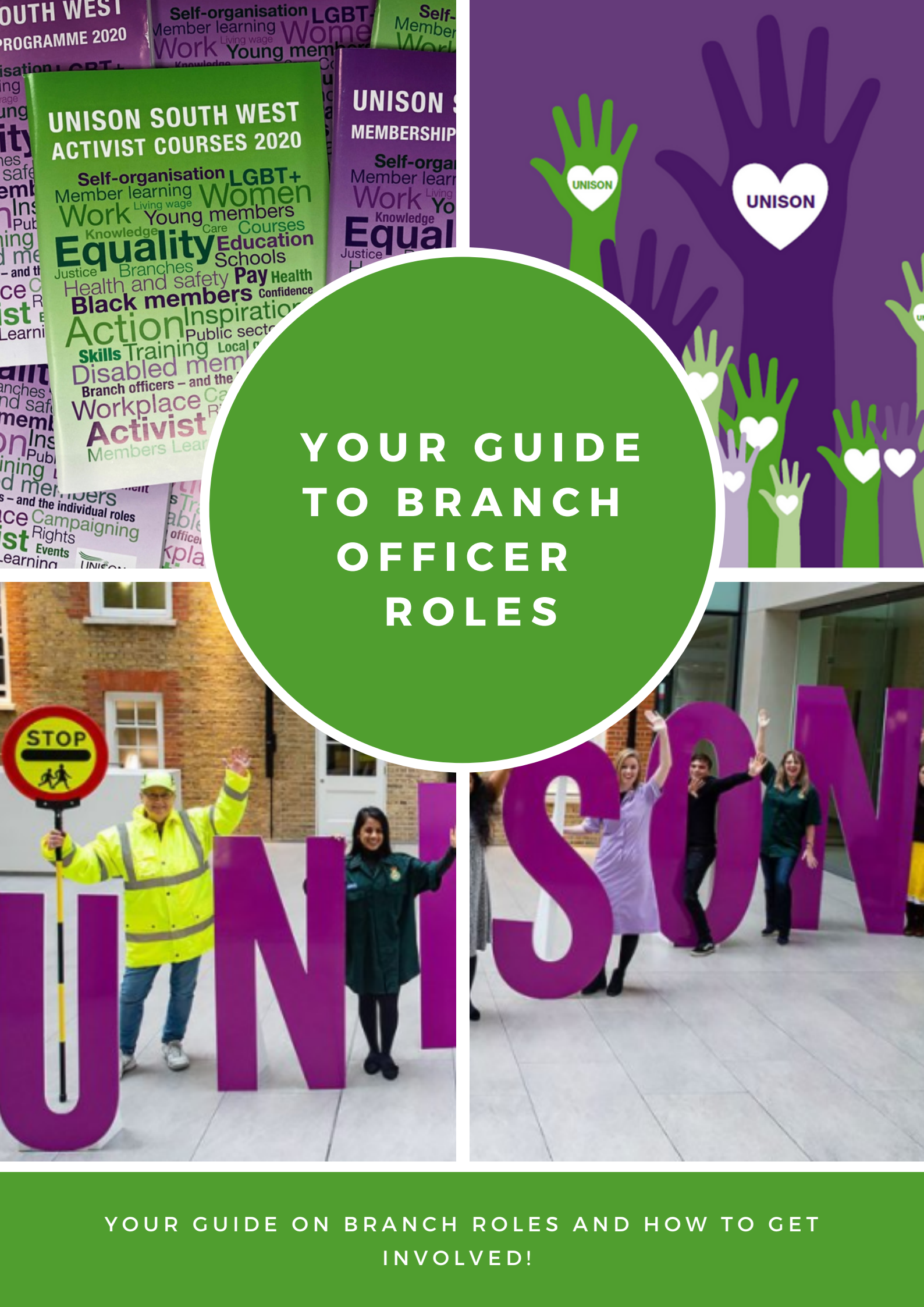




YOUR GUIDE TO BRANCH OFFICER ROLES

YOUR GUIDE ON BRANCH ROLES AND HOW TO GET INVOLVED!



WHAT DOES A UNION REP DO?

- Talk to, recruit and organise members around workplace issues
- Talk to members about workplace problems, advise them and keep them informed of latest developments
- Represent members in your workplace
- Be involved in how your branch and union is run



DO I GET ANY REGULAR TRAINING

Yes - all UNISON activists get free training which runs throughout the year.

- You'll receive regular information on training courses covering a wide range of workplace issues. These are normally run at regional level.
- Where UNISON is recognised reps have rights to time off for training and to carry out union duties



WHAT RIGHTS DO I HAVE A REP?

- Meetings with members and management
- Reasonable time for preparation and research
- Time to keep members informed
- Access to UNISON learning where UNISON is recognised to ensure skills and knowledge are up to date
- Mentor / coach as part of ongoing development

BRANCH LEADERSHIP ROLES

BRANCH SECRETARY

The secretary acts as the strategic lead officer and co-ordinator of the branch.

The secretary encourages partnership working within the branch committee and the development of new representatives, will be the manager of branch staff and will manage the delegation of work to other branch officers and branch staff as appropriate, whilst providing support and guidance. Under rule G4.2 the secretary is responsible for the following tasks;

- Guide the branch's development through the preparation and implementation of a branch organisation and development plan
- Ensure the representation of members within the branch in accordance with national guidance and that case forms and applications for services forwarded to UNISON offices are properly completed and authorised
- Provide strategic leadership to the branch committee on implementing campaigning and lobbying activity on branch and wider UNISON objectives, working in liaison especially with the branch Labour Link officer and branch Communications officer
- Convene and attend all meetings of the branch - arrange for the minutes of meetings to be kept in a proper manner and circulated to all branch officers and stewards
- Arrange for branch records to be kept in a proper manner which includes the speedily and accurately and maintains records in accordance with UNISON's systems
- Ensure regular communication with the members of the branch with news of campaigns, negotiations, issues, branch developments and activities
- Communicate with the union's regional and head offices on behalf of the branch
- Ensure that branch members are aware of opportunities to participate in the activities of the wider union, or within self-organisation if appropriate
- Co-ordinate all branch negotiations and industrial relations matters



Learning
in UNISON



BRANCH SECRETARY CONTINUED...

- Ensure that members and stewards are aware, and take advantage, of educational and training opportunities within UNISON
- Support, mentor and encourage the stewards in the branch on an individual and collective basis. The branch secretary should seek to meet with each steward on a one-to-one basis, to discuss issues and workplace organisation
- Ensure that appropriate publicity activities are developed and co-ordinated by the branch and act as spokesperson for the branch when in contact with other levels of the union and external organisations
- Ensure that members receive the benefits, rights and services to which they are entitled Code of Good Branch Practice 2014
- Ensure, in conjunction with the branch committee, that the branch observes the union's rules, supports UNISON campaigns and works towards achieving UNISON's objectives

BRANCH CHAIR

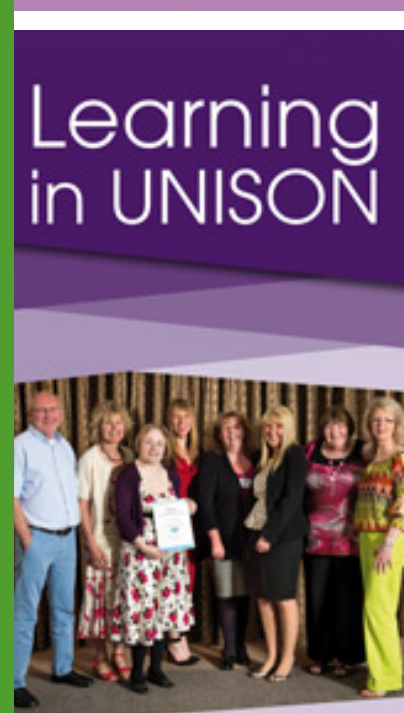
The branch chair presides at all the meetings of the branch and branch committee. Key tasks relating to the role are;

- To agree the agenda for meetings with the secretary
- To ensure that business is properly conducted
- To advise the branch officers and branch committee in respect of matters relating to procedure and interpretation of rules
- To ensure that all functions of the branch are carried out
- To work closely with the secretary to provide leadership to the branch

ASSISTANT BRANCH SECRETARY AND VICE BRANCH CHAIR

The assistant branch secretary and vice branch chair roles are not in the official branch roles list, however they are key roles for branches particularly larger branches.

The assistant secretary supports the secretary and can deputise when required, larger branches can also utilise the assistant secretary to mentor new reps and manage specific elements of the branches organising and development plans.





BRANCH MANAGEMENT ROLES

Treasurer and membership officer are key branch roles that manage the finances and keep track of branch membership. These two roles are administrative and do not include member representation tasks.

TREASURER

The Treasurer has a watchdog role over all aspects of financial management, working closely with members of the leadership team to safeguard the branches' finances. The main responsibilities of branch treasurers include:

- Keeping accounts in accordance with the rules
- Preparing budgets for defined areas of activities such as welfare, recruitment, campaigning, etc
- Providing reports on the financial position of the branch to the branch committee or branch executive committee
- Providing a detailed financial report for the annual branch meeting(s)
- Advising the branch on matters relating to financial management and appropriate expenditure
- Providing an audited annual return of branch income



MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

The membership officer not only keeps track of the branches' membership but also works to develop recruitment and organising in the branch. The role includes:

- Mapping the branch's membership to identify membership density and steward coverage and monitor the branch's recruitment and retention rate
- Making sure the branch and union has accurate membership records
- Use membership system WARMS to update, manage and monitor membership data integrity
- Work with the branch committee and regional staff to develop and implement the branch's organisation and development plan
- Make recommendations to the branch committee on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets, etc.



BRANCH EQUALITY ROLES

Equality co-ordinator Equality rep

All UNISON representatives should promote equality and challenge discrimination in their union role. Equality Co-ordinators, whilst not expected to be an expert on all equality matters, lead and co-ordinate the branch equality work.

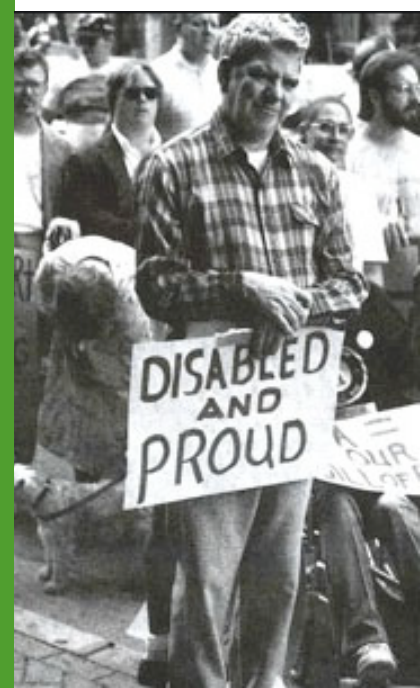
The Equality Co-ordinator is not a representative of self-organised groups but is elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting. They work with representatives of self-organised groups, equality representatives and all activists.

They support the training and development of other union representatives and monitor progress. Branch Equality Co-ordinators should share good practice where there are multiple workplace representatives within branches.

Branches can elect equality representatives for each of their work groups. The role of the equality rep is to promote equality and challenge discrimination in their local area, keeping the Branch Equality Co-ordinator updated on developments.

Key tasks for the Equality Co-ordinator include:

- To be the central liaison point for equality in the branch and to distribute information on equality issues
- To co-ordinate and support the work of UNISON equality reps at branch level
- To liaise with and support their branch self-organised groups
- To promote an equality dimension in all the branch's work, including bargaining
- To advise branch officers and the branch committee on proportionality and fair representation, including in branch elections.
- To act as a mentor or buddy to new equality reps and to help them identify their training needs



SELF ORGANISED GROUPS

What are self organised groups?

UNISON strives to increase participation and development of members in under represented groups through self organisation. There are four self organised groups;

Black Members

Women

Disabled members

LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender+)

There are also equality groups for retired and young members.

These groups meet locally, regionally and nationally to discuss, campaign and organise around the specific issues which affect them.

They help UNISON understand equality and meet our equality aims.

YOUNG MEMBERS OFFICER

The role of the young members' officer is ideal for someone who is interested in becoming more active in the union. The post may be a stepping stone to becoming a steward or taking on wider roles. Tasks relating to the post of young members' officer:

- Recruit new members and to encourage existing young members to become active in the branch
- To make sure issues of concern to young workers are raised by the branch and act as a focal point for all young workers in the branch and workplaces
- To receive and distribute UNISON young members information and encourage involvement in UNISON young members campaigns
- Build branch young members organisation and to ensure there are potential new young members' officers in the future

Other branch officers will assist in these tasks.

Branch Young Members' Officer must be under 27 years of age for the whole of their term of office and be nominated by young members.



BRANCH HEALTH & SAFETY ROLES

Health & Safety Officer

Health & Safety Rep

Promoting health & safety at work is a branch priority even though employers have clear legal duties to make sure that employment does not cause death, injury or ill-health, health and safety is a trade union issue and not something which can be left to management.

Branches can elect health & safety representatives for each of their work groups / geographical areas. The role of the health & safety rep is to promote health & safety and champion concerns / issues in their local area, keeping the branch health and safety officer updated on developments.

The branch health and safety officer's role includes:

- Making sure members, safety reps and branch officers are aware of health and safety issues
- Co-ordinating the activity of safety reps, including making sure that there are enough reps in the workplaces organised by the branch, and convening regular meetings of safety reps
- Organising the information held by the branch on health and safety
- Acting as a link between safety reps and other branch reps to make sure that health and safety issues are treated as an integral part of the work of the branch
- Reporting on health and safety issues at branch meetings, committee meetings and annual meetings
- Liaising with relevant branch officers about priorities for health and safety training, campaigns and publicity materials
- Keeping contact with the region and regional service groups, for example via the regional health and safety committee and the national health and safety structures
- Liaising with the equalities officer to make sure that equal opportunities aspects of health and safety issues are taken into account and vice versa.





BRANCH WELFARE OFFICER

The branch welfare officer makes sure that members seeking welfare assistance receive a prompt, supportive and effective response. The role includes;

- Making sure branch officers, stewards and workplace reps, as well as employers, have regular up-to-date information about There for You (UNISON's Welfare charity) and its range of services
- Liaising and co-ordinating with the UNISON centre and regions to make sure There for You support is provided effectively
- Undertaking training and seek advice from There for You where necessary
- Developing and co-ordinating local welfare activity
- Developing links with local charities and sources of support such as citizen's advice bureaus and women's refuges



ENVIRONMENTAL ROLES

Environmental Officer

Green Rep

The Climate Emergency is happening now and unless we work together to stop it, our planet will change in drastic ways and future generations face a deeply uncertain future.

The environmental officer co-ordinates the union's green and environmental agenda and Green Reps in the branch - this is still a new role in many UNISON branches.

The job of trade union environmental officer involves;

- Representing the workforce in discussions and negotiations regarding the development and implementation of company / employer environmental policies and practices
- Where resources and capacity exist, the job can also involve acting on behalf of members as a link person with local environmental campaign organisations such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace or Stop Climate Chaos
- Environmental policies and practices can cover areas such as energy use, recycling, travel and procurement.



BRANCH COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

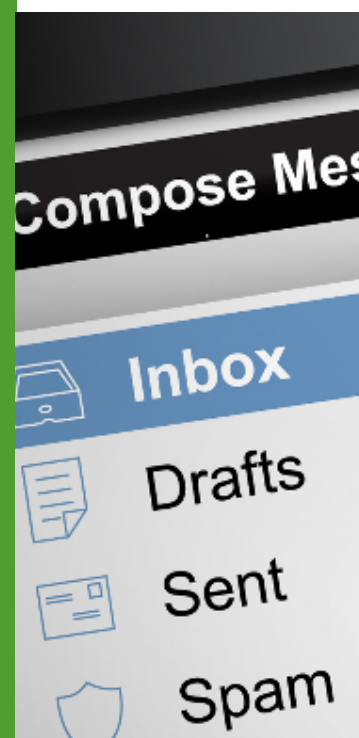
The role includes;

- Explaining UNISON's policies and providing the information members need to play an active role in their union
- Helping the branch's recruitment, organising and supporting UNISON's national and regional campaigns
- Creating a positive image for the branch and wider union among members, potential members and the public
- Producing news-sheets, bulletins or digital communication for distribution to branch members and ensuring communications are in the accessible formats members
- Make sure that centrally and regionally produced publicity, communications and campaign materials are distributed, as appropriate, to stewards, members and non-members
- Monitoring and liaising with local media

INTERNATIONAL OFFICER

This officer develops and leads on international solidarity activities including campaigns, twinning with sister unions and support for projects abroad. The role includes:

- Co-ordinating the branch's work on international relations and making sure members are informed of national policy on international matters
- Receiving and distributing relevant information and encouraging members to be aware of the importance of international solidarity issues within the context of the overall work of the union
- Liaising where appropriate with central and regional international structures and reporting the views of the branch on international activities
- Liaising with other branch officers concerning publicity and education on international issues and liaise with the solidarity organisations and campaigns that UNISON is affiliated to
- Encourage members of the branch to take action and take part in international solidarity activities organised nationally or regionally developing an international perspective among members, stewards and branch officers.





BRANCH STEWARD

Why become a UNISON steward?

Want to do something a little more - help your colleagues and other members by becoming a steward or workplace contact.

Being a workplace rep for UNISON gives you the opportunity to;

1. make a positive difference to people's work lives
2. learn new skills and meet new people
3. help create a fairer society

Tasks relating to the post of steward include;

- To be the first and main point of contact for members with the union
- To recruit new members
- To work with members to establish an organised workplace
- To support and advise members on workplace issues and act as a spokesperson for the members they represent and for the branch
- To represent members with the employer, dependent on their experience and confidence
- To represent members within the branch committee
- To be answerable to the members they represent

New stewards will be mentored and supported through branch buddying schemes making this an end to end supportive development opportunity!



WORK PLACE CONTACT

The role of the workplace contact is to let your branch know what is going on in your workplace and to help the union get messages out to its members.

It is also a great learning opportunity and starting point to get involved in the union.

LABOUR LINK OFFICER

England, Wales and Scotland only

The Labour Link officer is elected by, and accountable to, the Labour Link section within the branch and must be an individual member of the Labour Party.

This is because the post holder should work to take UNISON policy forward in the party, including being a delegate to the general committee of the party and encouraging joint work and campaigning with the local constituency Labour Party.

The branch UNISON Labour Link officer is the key contact point for information about regional and national UNISON Labour Link matters and is responsible for co-ordinating our activities in the branch. They also represent the interests of Labour Link levy payers on the UNISON branch committee. The role includes;

- Explaining and developing the role of the UNISON Labour Link within the branch and ensuring that correct procedures are followed regarding the rights of Labour Link levy payers
- Acting as the central contact point for information on Labour Link matters from national and regional levels of the union, and from the Labour Party, and circulating it to Labour Link members in the branch, convening meetings of members as necessary
- Communicating with Labour Party members within the branch and encouraging individual membership of the Labour Party
- Attending the UNISON branch committee and agreeing appropriate means of promoting UNISON policy in the Labour Party
- Organising elections for branch UNISON Labour Link representation within the regional Labour Link as necessary and making sure branch delegates report on their activities on behalf of members
- Liaising with the Labour Link regional political officer
- Promoting political education and policy discussions
- Strengthening links with Labour locally by getting the branch to affiliate to the local Labour Party and electing delegates to attend meeting
- Building campaigning work around key issues and co-ordinating campaigns with the Labour Party in council, Westminster, Scotland, Wales and European elections

