

Roles and Responsibilities within BCP Branch

Stewards

UNISON aims to have at least one steward in each workplace and department and one for every twenty-five members in larger departments and where members work shifts.

Stewards are elected each year by the group of members that they represent and the role is open to job share. Stewards engage in different levels of activity depending on their experience, skills and the time they are able to commit.

A UNISON steward should seek to:

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

Being elected as a steward gives a representative access to important rights and benefits:

- training by UNISON
- regular UNISON mailings
- access to UNISON advice and information
- support from a UNISON organiser should they face serious problems at work.
- paid time off for training, meetings with members and managers, and other union work
- use of employers' telephones, email, and internal mail
- access to an office and lockable facilities at work.

Health and Safety Representatives

UNISON aims to have at least one health and safety representative in every workplace. In some cases, the safety representative and steward are the same person, but they have two separate roles.

Safety representatives have specific duties and responsibilities and also have important legal rights. These include:

- making representations to the employer on behalf of members on any health, safety and welfare matter
- representing members in consultation with Health and Safety Executive inspectors or other enforcing authorities
- inspecting designated workplace areas at least every three months
- investigating any potential hazards, complaints by members and causes of accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases.

- facilities and support from the employer to carry out inspections and receive legal and technical information.

UNISON Learning Representatives

Their precise role varies according to their own circumstances but focuses on:

- raising awareness of lifelong learning among members and helping to identify and articulate the learning needs of members
- negotiating with employers on learning issues within the workplace
- They have some rights to time off for training and carrying out their duties.

Workplace Contacts

This is an ideal role for someone who is:

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- interested in becoming a steward or safety representative but would like to find out more about what is involved
- It is also ideal for those groups of members who can find no-one willing to be a steward

Workplace contacts have access to a range of benefits from UNISON. They include:

- regular UNISON information
- involvement in branch work
- some training courses
- advice on dealing with workplace problems.

UNISON Equality Representatives

- To work with the Service Unit's equality lead to identify instances of good and bad equalities practice within their workplace
- To work with the Branch Equality Officer to advocate for good equality practices in the workplace and branch
- To raise awareness within the workplace of the work the union and the branch does around equality
- To work with the Branch Equality Officer to inform branch negotiators by identifying and analysing information about the employer's equality performance
- To encourage the branch to prioritise equality by e.g. raising issues at branch meetings
- To signpost members with potential equality related cases to appropriate stewards or branch officers
- To undertake training on sector specific equalities legislation such as: the Equality Duties, Single Status, The Knowledge and Skills Framework
- Together the Branch Equality Officer and the Equality Reps will research and analyse their employer's policies and practices considering Equalities legislation and guidance, producing key information to feed into existing branch negotiating structures.

Branch Officers

Each branch elects annually the following core branch officers and each branch officer post may be shared between two or more members subject to the approval of the branch. Branches are required to make use of this facility as an effective means of sharing the workload and involving more members in the work of the branch:

- Branch Secretary
- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- Education Co-ordinator
- Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator
- Equalities Co-ordinator
- Health and Safety Officer
- Communications Officer
- International Officer
- Membership Officer
- Young Members Officer^
- Labour Link Officer
- Retired Members Officer+
- Welfare Officer
- Auditor
- Schools Convenor*
- BCP Council Directorate Convenors^
- Pensions Officer
- Environmental Officer
- Women's Officer
- Black Members Officer
- Disabled Members Officer
- LGBT+ Officer

^The Young Persons Officer must be under 27 years old.

+The Retired Members Secretary must be a retired member.

*The Schools Convenor must be a school member, nominated by two school members and/or the branch Schools Committee.

^To be A BCP Directorate Convenor a member must hold their substantive post within the directorate for BCP Council.

The branch is concerned with succession planning and actively identifies and encourages individuals to come forward and stand for election. This is to ensure a managed handover of responsibilities from outgoing branch officers to the new.

Chair and Vice Chair

Tasks relating to the office of Branch Chair and Vice Chair:

- to preside at all meetings of the branch and branch committee
- 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.

Branch Secretary

The branch secretary is the main contact person with the wider union.

They handle branch administration and work with the branch chair and other leading officers to provide leadership. They may also be a senior negotiator.

The details of the role may vary depending on branch size, but typically it will cover areas such as:

- acting as the strategic lead officer and co-ordinator within the branch
- encouraging partnership working within the branch committee and the development of new representatives and stewards
- managing any branch staff
- managing the delegation of work to other branch officers and branch staff as appropriate, while providing support and guidance
- guiding the branch's development by preparing and implementing a branch organisation and development plan
- making sure the representation of members within the branch is in accordance with national guidance and in partnership with regional staff
- convening and attending all meetings of the branch and branch committees and making sure proper minutes are kept and circulated
- making sure branch records are kept in a proper manner
- making sure the branch processes membership applications speedily and accurately and maintains records in accordance with UNISON's systems
- making sure there is regular communication with branch members, including news of campaigns, negotiations, issues, branch developments and activities
- communicating with the wider union, including the region and centre, on behalf of the branch
- making sure that branch members are aware of opportunities to take part in the activities of the wider union, including self-organisation if appropriate
- supporting, mentoring and encouraging stewards and reps in the branch on an individual and collective basis; co-ordinating all branch negotiations and industrial relations matters
- leading the branch committee in making sure that the branch observes the union's rules, supports UNISON campaigns and works towards achieving UNISON's objectives.

Treasurer

Tasks relating to the office of Treasurer:

- to conduct the branch's financial business
- to keep accounts in accordance with the rules
- to provide reports on the financial position of the branch to the branch committee or branch executive committee
- to provide a detailed financial report for the annual branch meeting(s)
- to advise the branch officers and branch committee in respect of matters relating to financial management and appropriate expenditure
- to provide an audited annual return of branch income.

Education Co-ordinator

Tasks relating to the post of branch education co-ordinator:

- Helps arrange training courses and education programmes for members, stewards, health and safety reps and branch officers
- making sure all new stewards and reps receive information about the branch and their role
- publicising the range of educational and training opportunities available to members and activists, and making sure that all reps go on appropriate courses
- talking to existing reps about their ongoing training and development needs
- organising a plan of training for activists and producing an annual budget to meet its costs
- keeping records of what training has been undertaken and by whom within the branch
- negotiating with the employer, along with union learning reps on issues relating to learning including time off
- supporting and co-ordinating the work of buddies and mentors in the branch.

Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator

Works with employers and co-ordinates the work of union learning reps in supporting members with lifelong learning and skills for life. A branch with a number of learning reps working as a team, led by a co-ordinator, can ensure:

- learning representatives are accountable and involved in the branch
- learning is high on the branch's agenda and linked into its organising, bargaining and equalities work
- a clear progression route for learning representatives who want to become more involved in other aspects of branch activity.

The lifelong learning co-ordinator's role includes:

- working closely with the branch education co-ordinator (the same person may take on both roles)
- co-ordinating the activity of union learning reps in the branch education team
- working with colleagues to recruit and organise new learning representatives
- being closely involved in negotiating around learning with the employer
- making sure members have information on learning opportunities, including UNISON Open College courses, Return to Learn and Lifelong Learning
- making sure the work of learning reps is fully integrated into the branch.

Equalities Co-ordinator

It is not expected that the role be autonomous but will co-ordinate with Self organized groups within the Branch on equalities work. Everyone shares responsibility for tackling prejudice and discrimination and promoting equality. Tasks relating to the role are:

- to be the identified and well publicised point of contact in the branch for equality issues
- to collect and share information on equalities issues, including information from the regional and national self-organised groups
- to make sure other branch officers and the branch committee consider the equalities dimension of everything they do

- to make sure “equal opportunities” is being raised in all collective bargaining – not just in bargaining on ‘pure’ equalities issues
- to encourage and support the development of branch self-organised groups on behalf of the branch committee
- to have a co-ordinating role among the self-organised groups and between the self-organised groups and the rest of the branch
- to make sure new recruits know about UNISON’s commitment to equality and opportunities to participate in self-organisation
- to advise the branch officers and branch committee on the development and monitoring of the action plan to achieve proportionality and fair representation;
- to co-ordinate the development and training of members from under-represented groups. to coordinate motions and support to delegates attending self-organised group conferences.

Health and Safety Officer

Tasks relating to the role are:

- to increase the awareness of members, health and safety representatives and branch officers of health and safety issues
- to organise the information held by the branch on health and safety
- to co-ordinate the activity of health and safety representatives and to organise regular meetings of health & safety representatives to exchange information and consider priorities
- to be closely involved in all negotiations with the employer on matters related to health and safety
- to advise the branch committee on health and safety issues arising in the branch and to recommend policies and priorities
- to act as a link between the health and safety representatives and other branch representatives to ensure that health and safety issues are treated as an integral part of the work of the branch | to maintain contact with the region and regional service groups, for example via the regional health and safety committee.

Communications Officer

The branch communications officer’s 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 and organising;
- 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;
- making sure branch communications are in the accessible formats’ members need;
- making 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
- making sure members are informed of national policy on international matters
- receiving and distributing relevant information
- 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
- liaising with the solidarity organisations and campaigns that UNISON is affiliated to
- encouraging 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.

Membership Officer

Keeps track of the branch's membership and works to develop recruitment and organising.

The role includes:

- mapping the branch's membership to identify membership density and steward coverage and where there are gaps
- making sure the branch and union has accurate membership records
- monitoring the branch's recruitment and retention rate
- working with the branch committee and regional organising staff to develop and implement the branch's organisation and development plan
- making recommendations to the branch committee on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets, etc.

Young Members' Officer

The role of the branch 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. The responsibilities include:

- recruiting new members and organising and encouraging existing young members to become active in the branch and in UNISON campaigns
- building a branch young members' organisation and making sure there are potential new young members' officers in the future
- making sure issues of concern to young workers are raised through the branch
- acting as a focal point for all young workers in the branch and workplaces
- receiving and distributing UNISON young members' information.
- Other branch officers will help in these tasks. Branch young members' officer must be under 27 years of age for the whole of their term of office.

Labour Link Officer

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 meetings
- building campaigning work around key issues and co-ordinating campaigns with the Labour Party in council, Westminster, Scotland, Wales and European elections.

Retired Members' Officer

The retired members' officer enables retired members of the branch to continue to be active in the union through the branch's retired members' section, this includes:

- making sure that members approaching retirement have the opportunity to become retired members
- organising meetings of the branch retired members
- encouraging the participation of retired members in branch activities as appropriate
- making links with other retirement organisations in the area and UNISON's national retired members' structures
- attending meetings of the branch committee
- making sure the retired members section functions in accordance with UNISON rules and any branch standing orders and procedures.

Welfare Officer

Makes sure that that members seeking welfare assistance receive a prompt, supportive and effective response. This 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 Bureau and women's refuges.

Auditor

The role of the auditor is to act on behalf of the branch's members to ensure probity and that all branch expenditure is underpinned by democratic decisions made in accordance with the UNISON rule book. A candidate for the post of auditor cannot be a member of the branch committee.

- to undertake an annual audit of the branch financial records
- to provide a written report of the annual audit to the annual general meeting
- to report any financial irregularities to UNISON's internal audit department.

Schools Convenor

The Schools Convenor is a senior steward, and leads the branch organisation of school members. The post is elected by school members and the role includes:

- co-ordinating and leading the work of the team of UNISON representatives in schools
- to develop branch organisation and recruitment of school members
- getting involved in negotiating and bargaining on behalf of school members
- supporting stewards and other representatives in advising and representing members in a school setting.

BCP Council Directorate Convenor

Within BCP Council, a convenor is a senior steward. Each convenor role would be based in a Directorate, working with stewards within each department, with designated release time for their duties.

Each convenor will be elected to lead branch organisation at the directorate level. The convenor should be elected, within the context of normal annual elections, by the members of the particular Directorate.

Tasks relating to the role of convenor:

- to co-ordinate and lead the work of the team of UNISON representatives at the directorate level within the degree of autonomy
- to develop branch organisation and recruitment at the directorate level

- to negotiate and bargain with the employer (e.g. through the Joint Consultative Committees)
- to support stewards and other representatives in advising and representing members

Pensions Officer

The Pensions Officer is a member of the Dorset Pension Board and is active amongst the members by:

- providing updates on and information about the Local Government Pension Scheme through the Pension Board, ensuring the Dorset Pension scheme is run efficiently and within the law, maximising money available to pay your pension
- promoting UNISON objectives that investments are green, that businesses and supply chains well managed and governed with safe working conditions and fair pay, without discrimination
- working through the Dorset Pension Board and Branch to fight the continuing succession of Government attacks on the Local Government Pension Scheme, all of which seek to undermine your pension benefits which we all contribute to every month.

Environmental Officer

The role includes:

- co-ordinating the union's green and environmental agenda within the branch
- representing the workforce in discussions and negotiations regarding the development and implementation of company / employer environmental policies and practices
- 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
- developing and contributing to policies and practices such as energy use, recycling, travel and procurement.

Women's Officer

The branch Women's Officer's role includes:

- building links with women's sector organisations and where appropriate signposting to specialist organisations for women (domestic abuse/Rape Crisis) and assisting in negotiations on employer policies on violence against women
- ensuring that the branch has a wide range of resources for women, such as books, videos and leaflets, and making these resources accessible to all women in the branch
- organising a women's group and identifying and dealing with concerns raised
- identifying women members of the branch, and liaising with the branch committee on progress towards proportionality
- being a focal point for women's issues for members and raising issues affecting women particularly those with service conditions implications with the branch committee
- supporting women in their issues generally and campaigning on issues that are important to women.

Black Members Officer

The role includes:

- building a support network for members facing problems at work
- to provide a forum for the debate of race equality issues
- representing at branch committee and to lead/assist the branch to organise for race equality
- to organise and to encourage black members to get active and participate in the Black Members self-organised group
- to discuss local terms and conditions and equality issues concerning jobs, fair pay and conditions of service, promotion and progression
- assist members to get involved in union activism across the branch
- to organise and support at regional and national when possible at conferences etc.
- to challenge racism and discrimination experienced by Black members in the workplace and in wider society at Branch, Regional and National level.

Disabled Members Officer

The role provides that disabled members are encouraged to get active against discrimination by campaigning on issues such as:

- improved anti-discrimination legislation
- negotiating branch disability leave agreements
- improving inaccessible workplaces
- replacing information systems that don't meet disabled people's access needs
- eliminating negative attitudes and prejudice from employers, service users and the general public
- to encourage and assist members to get involved in union activism across the branch
- to organise and support at regional and national when possible at conferences etc.
- to challenge disability discrimination experienced by members in the workplace and in wider society at Branch, Regional and National level.

LGBT+ Officer

The role takes UNISON's priorities into the LGBT+ community which are to:

- recruit LGBT+ workers into the union
- to encourage and support the formation of an LGBT+ Self Organised Group
- support individual members by identifying and challenge discrimination, informing the union's negotiations with employers
- defend and promote LGBT+ public services
- campaign for equality
- to encourage and assist members to get involved in union activism across the branch
- to organise and support at regional and national level when possible at conferences etc.
- to challenge discrimination experienced by LGBT+ members in the workplace and in wider society – at Branch, Regional and National level.