



Want to find out more?

You can find out more about being a UNISON workplace representative from:

- your branch or regional office
- UNISON's Steward & Workplace Representative's Handbook (Stock No 1055)
- UNISON's Health & Safety Representative's Handbook (Stock No 1684)
- UNISON's Learning Representatives Handbook. (Stock number 2345)
- UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845, lines open Monday to Friday 6am to midnight and Saturday 9am to 4pm. Textphone users call 0800 0967 968
- UNISON's website at <http://www.unison.org.uk>

Willing to give it a try?

Then ask some members to nominate you and contact your branch. To become a steward you'll need to be properly elected. For other posts just check with your branch or regional office.

What happens once you are elected?

Your branch should notify your UNISON regional office of your details. This will ensure that you are placed on the central mailing list, notified of training courses, sent support materials, and issued with credentials. Your branch or regional office will also arrange for you to attend an induction course and start involving you in union activity.

**UNISON workplace representatives—
working with members to build the union**

UNISONdirect 0845 355 0845

Workplace representatives



UNISON

workplace representatives

UNISON is a democratic organisation which aims to put its members at the heart of everything it does.

The workplace representative is UNISON's most important link between the union and its members.

You don't need to have much experience or free time to be a representative. UNISON gives training and support and is happy that you do as much or as little as you feel able.

There are four types of representative:

- Workplace Contact
- Steward
- Union Learning Representative
- Health and Safety Representative

So there's bound to be one to suit you!

Workplace contacts

The workplace contact is an ideal role for members who would like to get more involved in UNISON but who do not want to take on the full role of elected steward.

Workplace contacts can get involved in a variety of ways, including:

- being a point of contact between members and the branch
- recruiting
- supporting members at work
- distributing information
- keeping notice boards up to date
- helping with branch organisation.

Workplace contacts can support existing stewards or branch officers, or can be established for groups of members who cannot find anyone willing to be a steward. Members who are interested in becoming stewards might want to take up this role first to get some experience before committing themselves further.

You do not need to be elected to be a workplace contact, but the members you are supporting should find some way of agreeing on who the contact should be.

Your UNISON branch or regional office will advise you.

A workplace contact has access to a range of services from UNISON, including:

- regular UNISON mailings
- involvement in branch work
- training
- advice on dealing with workplace problems.

Steward

UNISON aims to have at least one steward in each workplace and department, more in larger departments and where members work shifts.

As a steward your involvement and activity will vary depending on your experience, skills and the time you are able to commit. Your work may range from being a local contact in the workplace to a high level negotiator, but generally you will get involved in some, or all of the following:

- talking to members, distributing information and getting their views

- recruiting and organising
- helping members get advice on workplace problems
- being a spokesperson or representative for your workgroup.

Being an elected steward gives you access to important rights and support, including:

- recognition as a UNISON representative
- training by UNISON and the TUC
- paid time off for training, meetings with members and managers, and some other union work
- access to UNISON advice and information
- mentoring and support from branch and regional officers
- use of employers telephones, e-mail and internal mail by agreement

A steward is elected by the members they represent either at a meeting or by postal ballot. Elections are held annually, before the branch Annual General Meeting which takes place between January and March.

Union Learning Representative

Union Learning Representatives work closely with their branch education or Lifelong Learning co-ordinator to promote learning in the branch.

Learning reps may have had experience of adult learning such as Return to Learn (R2L), or they can be existing workplace representatives who want to develop learning in the workplaces they cover.

Some of the tasks learning representatives will be involved in include:

- raising awareness of lifelong learning issues in the workplace
- offering support and encouragement to learners

- encouraging learners to get involved in the branch
- working with the branch to promote workplace learning with employers

Union Learning Representatives are entitled to paid time off to undertake their role and for training, are encouraged to attend training courses, and have access to support from the branch and region. You do not need to be elected to hold this post, but you need to be ratified by your Branch Committee on an annual basis. UNISON is encouraging Learning Representatives to work together in Branch Education Teams with the elected Branch Education or Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator.

Health and Safety Representative

We aim to have at least one health and safety representative to cover every workplace where we have members.

As a health and safety representative you have a wide range of rights and functions, including:

- making representations, on behalf of members, on health, safety or welfare matters
- inspecting designated workplace areas
- investigating potential hazards, complaints by members and causes of accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases
- facilities and support in your role as safety representative from your employer
- time off with pay and for training.