

## **ACTIVITY 4 : - Unite structures and where you fit in?**

As a lay member led organisation Unite has a structure of regional and national committees to ensure our members have a voice in their union. These committees choose the direction our union goes, how money is spent and develops our policies, rules and campaigns. They also set our membership rates and where money is spent.

### **General Secretary**

The General secretary of Unite The Union is an elected position. The position is for a fixed term of 5 years and a ballot of all members takes place to appoint. Full details of this process and who is eligible to stand for election can be found under Rule 15 of the Unite Rule Book.

### **Executive Council**

The election of the Executive Council is for the period of three years. It meets at least four times per year. It is made up of representatives from the Unions Regional Structures, Industrial sectors and National Representatives of the Union's Women, Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority, Disabled, LGBT and Young Members.

The number of seats allocated to each sector / region is based upon membership density, those wishing to stand for election must receive the required number of nominations and also be Rule 6 compliant.

Full details of the executive council can be found under Rule 14 of the Unite Rule Book.

### **National Committees**

The National Sector Committees, Political Committee and Equalities Committees are elected for a period of three years. To be elected onto a National Committee you must be elected from the relevant Regional Sector, Political or Equalities Committee.

### **Regional Committee - RISC's, AAC's and Equalities committees**

Each Region has a Regional Committee, elected every three years following the election of the Regional Industrial Sector Committees (RISC's), Area Activist Committees (AAC's) and the Equalities Committees. In the same way as the Executive Committee is based on proportional representation in terms of numbers of members in each sector a similar process is followed by the regions. So those sectors with greater membership are allocated more seats on the regional committee.

In addition there is an observer seat allocated for a Retired Members Committee delegate.

Each Sector hold a conference at which delegates who have been nominated may stand for election. Nominations can be gained in advance of the conference or at the conference. To attend a Sector Conference a delegate must be Rule Six Compliant.

The structures above all meet four times a year.

# Branches

## Workplace

Ideally your branch will be based around your workplace, you need at least 50 members to have a workplace branch. To form and function as a branch you will need to elect four posts, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Political Officer. In many workplace branches the four posts are held by two people. So for example the Secretary and Treasurer roles are combined. No branch can be run by less than two people. Training is available for all branch officials and it is recommended that this is accessed as soon after election as possible. You do not have to be a workplace activist to hold one of these branch roles.

Each branch gains an income from the union based on their member numbers. A rough rule of thumb is your branch will gain £1 per member per month. This money can then be spent by the branch for the benefit of its members. (Rules do apply as to how monies can be spent).

## Sector Branches

In some cases group of workers in a particular sector within a region may not have enough members in a workplace to form a branch. An example of this is those members in the retail sector. So for example our retail staff in Leeds have a retail branch. It functions in the same way as a workplace branch, elects it's own officials and gains an income from it's membership numbers.

## Geographical (Industrial) Branches

Regions have been tasked with removing geographical branches where possible and replacing them with Sector Branches. It is felt that geographical branches are too large, do not represent members effectively and do not always function properly. For example the Leeds Geographical Branch has over 4,000 members from a wide range of sectors.

## Retired Members Branch

Those members who retire are asked to join a retired members branch, these branches are run geographically and many have activities and meetings for members more regularly than normal branches.

## Community Branches

The number of community members is growing and once membership reaches a viable number in a geographical area and activist come forward to run it a new community branch is formed. Only those members paying the community rate can join a community branch.

## Rule Six in a nutshell

We mention above Rule Six as a key criteria to being elected onto the structures of Unite. In a nutshell to be Rule Six Compliant you have to be an 'accountable representative of workers'.