

Getting involved in Unite BRANCHES

November 2021



If you'd like to get more involved in your union now is the time to do it. Elections for workplace representatives and branch officers will be taking place early in the first quarter of 2022, so this is your chance to become more active in Unite.

Elections for workplace representatives and branch officers take place once every three years. The next electoral period is 2022 to 2025. Your regional office will provide more information about how elections will be conducted, but all reps will be elected by the end of March 2022.

This leaflet provides a brief overview of the role of BRANCH OFFICERS in Unite the union and a general outline of what their roles entail.

The Branch in Unite the union

Everyone is in a union branch. These are usually based on workplaces, but they can also be based on an industry or geography. The Branch is the key structure through which members can come together to participate in the Union's activities and democracy, access services, recruit, organise, campaign, support local issues and influence Unite policy.

Branch officers are elected by and from the members of the branch. Details of how to run the elections are provided by your regional administration. All branch officers must be elected for the new electoral term by end of March 2022.

To ensure that a branch can function properly the rule book says that each branch will have at least the following officers to make it work: Rule 17 sets out how branches operate.

Branch Secretary

The role of branch secretary is vital for our democracy. They:

- Bring members together – arranging meetings, keeping records and communicating with members.
- Look after branch funds – all Branches have their own funds to help meet the costs of day to day running and the secretary (along with the Treasurer) ensures that the finances are correctly recorded and reported.
- Working with other reps to ensure that the union is strong in their workplace.

- Ensuring that the branch has a say in union elections and policy making – submitting nominations and motions for conferences.

Branch Chair

The chair presides over all meetings of the branch, keeps order and ensures that business is conducted in accordance with the union's rules and branch standing orders. The Chair works closely with the branch secretary to draw up meeting agendas, verify minutes and signs officials documents; is impartial and is seen to act fairly.

Branch Treasurer

The treasurer works in conjunction with the branch secretary to ensure that the finances of the branch are correctly recorded and reported. They prepare the paperwork for the quarterly audit by the regional administration. The rules allow for the positions of treasurer and secretary to be held by the same person.

Equalities Officer

The branch equalities officer raises awareness and promotes equality of opportunity in the branch; advises and supports members in relation to equality issues; encourages participation of women, Black & Asian Ethnic Minority (BAEM), LGBT+ and disabled members at all levels and promotes education for minority groups.

The branch may decide to elect other officers to share out the work of the branch, and take decisions between branch meetings, these members make up the branch committee.

Running a branch may sound challenging, but all of our Branch secretaries and officers receive quality training. The training is a great opportunity to learn – and meet other Unite activists from across all of our different workplaces and Sectors.

Branch officers are eligible to be nominated to various lay delegate or representative positions.

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