

Getting involved in Unite WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVES

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 different WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVES in Unite the union and a general outline of what their roles entail.

The role of the workplace representative is fairly self-explanatory and they are vital to the work of Unite. They are elected from the members in a workplace by those members. A representative may have a different title in your workplace but their place in the union is enshrined in the rule book (Rule 18) which sets out the following different types of workplace representative:

Workplace Reps/shop stewards

- Reps make a difference in their workplace by supporting, advising and representing members.
- Problem solving, communication, negotiating and influencing skills will be a key feature of the reps job.
- Reps allowed time off for trade union duties.

Safety Reps

- Investigating potential hazards and dangerous occurrences at the workplace and examine the causes of accidents at the workplace.
- Investigating complaints by any employee relating to health, safety or welfare at work.
- Taking up health, safety or welfare issues with the employer.
- Carrying out regular inspections representing workers in talks with the employer or the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or other safety enforcement agencies and get information from them.
- Attending meetings of safety committees.

Learning Reps

- Raise awareness of the benefits of learning.
- Encourages fellow workers to take up learning opportunities.
- Support members in learning.
- Provide advice and guidance on learning.
- Secure equal opportunities in learning.

Equality Reps

- Understanding equality issues.
- Developing knowledge on discrimination and the relevant legislation, policies and procedures.
- Helping make Unite workplaces focus on Dignity at Work issues and outlaw bullying.

Environment Reps

- working with your employer and members carry out an environmental survey of the workplace.
- To encourage and assist members with advice on how to reduce their carbon footprint at work.

These roles may sound challenging, but all of our workplace representatives receive quality training in all of the areas of their responsibility. The training is a great opportunity to learn – and meet other Unite activists from across all of our different workplaces and Sectors. The role of the Health & Safety reps is covered by law and specialist training is therefore available. Following your training support and advice is available from other reps or your union fulltime official.

Workplace reps are eligible to be nominated to various lay delegate or representative positions.

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