



A brief guide to Branch Officer Roles and Representative Roles

Branch chair: Someone who facilitates branch and committee meetings, agreeing the agenda for meetings with the secretary and making sure that business is properly conducted in line with union democracy. They work closely with the secretary and other officers to provide leadership to the branch.

Branch secretary: The main contact person with the wider union who handles branch admin. 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 act as the strategic lead officer and coordinator within the branch; communicating with the wider union, including the region and national on behalf of the branch.

Assistant branch secretary: Supports the branch secretary in their role and deputises in their absence. They work with the branch chair and branch secretary to provide leadership. They are involved in strategy and coordination of the branch and communicate with the wider union, including the region and national on behalf of the branch.

Branch treasurer: Responsible for managing branch finances, including keeping accounts. They provide reports on the financial position of the branch to the branch committee and providing an audited annual return of branch income.

Branch young members' officer: Advises and helps recruit young members while ensuring their voices have an influence across the union.

Equalities officer: Work on equal rights issues including sex, race, disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues (there may be up to four per branch). The role of a branch equality coordinator is to coordinate and monitor our shared responsibility for tackling prejudice, discrimination and promoting equality. They are responsible for collecting and sharing information on equalities issues, including information from the regional and national self-organised groups; making sure other branch officers and the branch committee consider the equalities dimension of everything they do.

Branch education coordinator: Helps arrange training courses and education programmes for members, stewards, health and safety reps and branch officers. They make 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.

Branch communications officer: Co-ordinates branch website, social media, newsletter and other communications, explaining UNISON's policies and providing the information members need to play an active role in their union;. They help with branch recruitment and organising and support UNISON's national and regional campaigns; creating a positive image for the branch and wider union among members, potential members and the public.

Branch international officer: Develops and leads on international solidarity activities including campaigns, twinning and support for projects abroad. They make sure members are informed of national policy on international matters; receiving and distributing relevant information and encouraging members to be aware of the importance of international solidarity issues within the context of the overall work of the union.

Branch health and safety officer: Promoting health and safety at work is one of the functions of the branch. Even though employers have clear legal duties to make sure that employment does not cause death, injury or ill-health, health and safety is a trade union issue and not something which can be left to management. The role includes making sure members, health and safety reps (whose activities they coordinate) and branch officers are aware of health and safety issues.

Retired members' officer: Supports UNISON retired members by campaigning on their behalf and organising local activities. They make sure that members approaching retirement have the opportunity to become retired members, organise meetings of the branch retired members and encourage the participation of retired members in branch activities as appropriate.

Labour link officer: Liaises with the local Labour Party and makes sure the views of UNISON members who pay the affiliated political fund levy are heard. They 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.

Branch membership officer: Keeps track of the branch's membership and works to develop recruitment and organising. They map the branch's membership to identify membership density and steward coverage, make sure the branch and union has accurate membership records, and monitor the branch's recruitment and retention rate.

Environmental officer: Co-ordinates the union's green and environmental agenda in the branch. This involves representing the workforce in discussions and negotiations regarding the development and implementation of the employer's environmental policies and practices. The post can also involve 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.

Branch lifelong learning coordinator: Works with employers and co-ordinates the work of union learning reps in supporting members with lifelong learning and skills for life. They make sure members have information on learning opportunities, including UNISON Open College courses, Return to Learn and Lifelong Learning.

Branch 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 and liaising and coordinating with the UNISON centre and regions to make sure There for You support is provided effectively.

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Stewards or Workplace Reps: A UNISON steward is an elected representative who talks to, recruits and organises members around workplace issues. They give members information about union issues by publicising campaigns, distributing leaflets and keeping members informed about - and involved in - local negotiations. They are advisers and sounding boards, talking to members about workplace problems and - if they feel confident - giving advice on how to deal with these. They may arrange for a member to get advice or assistance from elsewhere in the union, or represent them in a workplace issue. Stewards have a right to be involved in how their branch is run and are the most important link between the members and the union. Stewards are elected each year by the group of members that they represent and the post is open to job share.

Health and safety reps: A health and safety representative has the right to training and to raise issues which affect the health and safety of members. Workplaces with union health and safety reps have half the serious injury rates as those without. So our reps play an important part in keeping the workplace safe. Employers have a legal responsibility to keep the workplace safe by carrying out risk assessments to find potential dangers - and then acting on the findings. UNISON health and safety reps make sure that employers act to minimise risks. Full training is available.

Union learning reps: This role centres on raising awareness of lifelong learning among the members and helping to identify and articulate the learning needs of particular members, as well as negotiating with employers on learning issues.