

Wales
TUC
Cymru

Reaching younger workers

A guide for trade unionists
Wales TUC Cymru

Reaching younger workers a toolkit for union reps

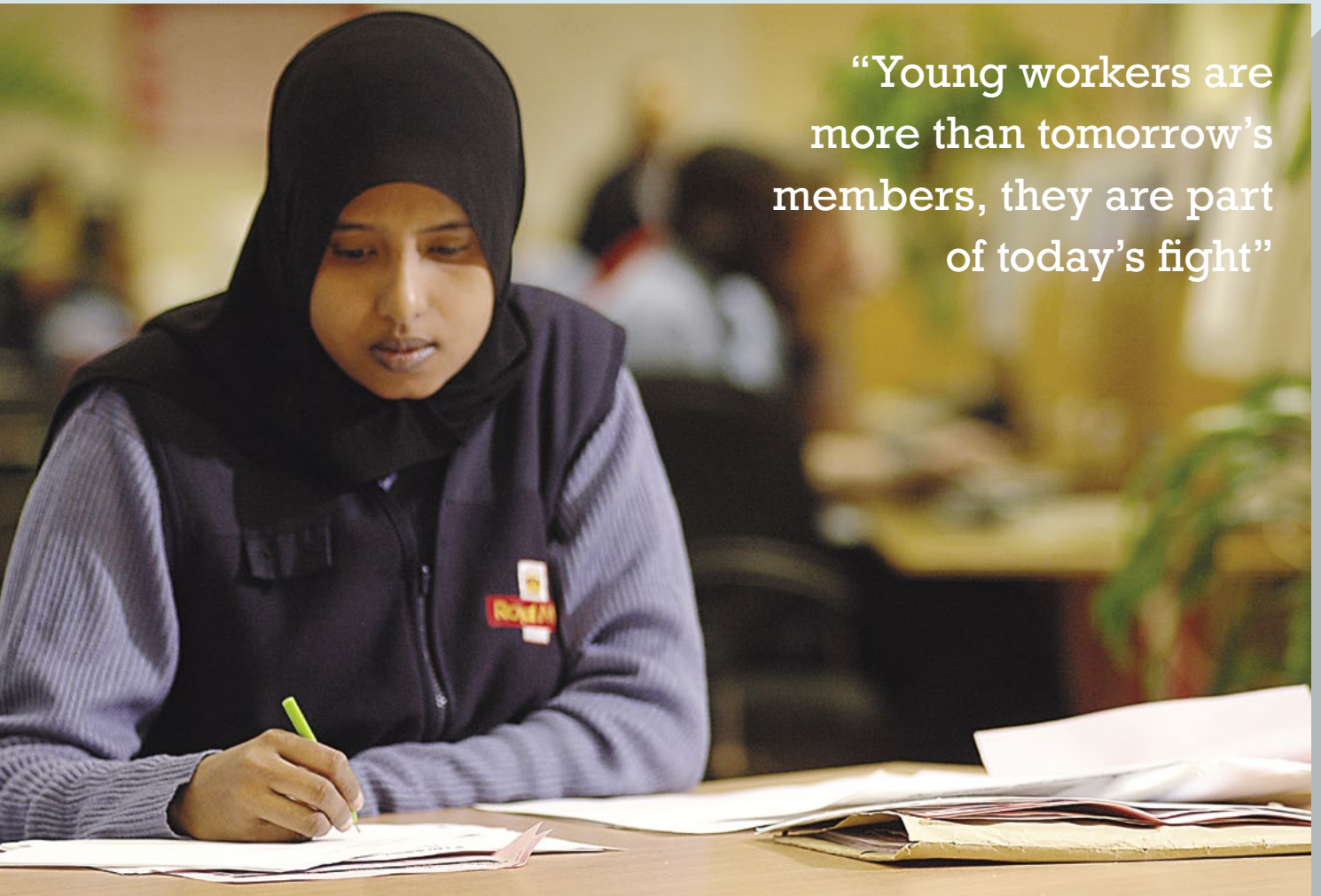
About this toolkit

The aim of this toolkit is to communicate the need for unions to actively engage with young workers, and to give them the platform to speak for themselves. We know that for unions to still be relevant in the future, they need to be relevant to young workers now. Young workers are more than tomorrow's members, they are part of today's fight, and if we as a movement want to build and grow, we need to be engaging with them with a compelling offer in a language they can relate to. This toolkit is aimed to help you do just that.

About the Wales TUC

The Wales TUC exists to make the working world a better place for everyone. We want Wales to become a fair work nation. With 49 member unions and over 400,000 members in Wales, the Wales TUC has a key role in raising issues that affect workers in Wales.

We support unions to grow and thrive, and we stand up for everyone who works for a living. Join us.



“Young workers are more than tomorrow's members, they are part of today's fight”

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Why should unions care about young workers?

Our movement needs to grow if we are to continue to be one that can change the world of work. To do that, we need to find ways to increase the numbers of young members in our trade unions and to find the next generation of union reps and activists to stand for members in the workplace. Without them, we won't be able to make the changes we want.

There are, however, challenges ahead. Less than 1 in 20 union members are aged between 16 and 24 and over half of union reps are 50 and over, which means over the next 10 to 15 years we will lose over half our reps. We urgently need to address this demographic cliff-edge.

The first challenge is how to organise the next generation of workers, particularly those at the start of their working lives. That first challenge is inextricably linked to the second: how to increase levels of unionisation in the private sector. Membership amongst young workers isn't low because they don't like unions, but because most of them work in the private sector – and specifically parts of that sector which are virtually union-free zones.

Another reason for lower membership amongst young workers is that through the generations we've seen a shift in how people see the world. Younger people are more likely to think first about individual approaches rather than collective ones. This doesn't mean young people are in any way selfish, indeed many young people are involved in collective activism; LGBTQ+ rights, Black Lives Matter, environmental groups and so on, it simply means their workplace focus is different.

This doesn't mean trade unionism doesn't have anything to offer them. But it does mean that we need to rethink how we communicate and what we emphasise.

For example, instead of saying “let's stand in solidarity together” we might say “unions are your best way to get ahead at work.”

And finally, we've got an image problem. Younger workers don't think unions are for them – believing that we exist for older people, for the public sector not the private sector, and for those in careers rather than jobs.

But we know different. Unions are for everyone. They've had a tremendously positive impact on millions of people's lives and can continue to do so. So let's look at some of the challenges facing young workers today and how we can share with them the benefits of trade union membership.



Section 1

Young workers' voices

Young workers' voices are missing in much of our movement

Not because they are having a great experience of work – far from it. No, too often Britain's young workers aren't trade union members because we haven't done enough to help them realise the benefits of trade unionism in a language and form that is accessible, persuasive and relevant to their working lives. There can be no more urgent task for a union movement that exists to win fair work for everyone, and one way to do that is to make sure that young workers are in a union which understands their lives and is geared up to win the changes to work they need.

Unlike previous generations, current young workers are not turning to unions as they age and settle down. Young workers' absence from trade unionism has many interrelating causes. Some causes are not within our control; young workers are much more likely to be employed in small, private sector workplaces, making collective dynamics at work much harder. Even where they are employed in a branch of a large chain - retail stores or coffee shops for example - there is often no opportunity to talk to or mix with staff from other branches. Also, their own parents are less likely to be union

“For a generation who uses Netflix, Spotify and Amazon Prime, it's jarring to be handed a piece of paper to fill in.”

members. If young workers don't hear about trade unions at home or at school, no wonder they are new to our movement when they first start work.

And there's a gap in how we engage with young workers. In general, unions don't offer the kind of digital experiences young people are used to. For a generation who uses Netflix, Spotify and Amazon Prime, it's jarring to be handed a piece of paper to fill in, or to have to call an office when you move home to let them know your new address. In the private sector, companies that are reluctant to innovate are going out of business. Trade unionism is too important to allow anything comparable to happen.

The TUC commissioned a report to look at the group of young workers who would most benefit from being in a union. We have called them Britain's young core workers, because they are the backbone of our economy now and for decades into the future.

Britain's young core workers

- Aged 21–30
- Predominantly working in the private sector
- Working full or part-time
- Not in full-time education
- Earning low to average wages.

Who are Britain's young core workers?

Britain's young core workers are a group of 3.5 million people, all working either full or part-time and earning less than £10.26 per hour. Nine per cent are BAME, and nearly 10 per cent have a disability. They live in all regions and nations of the UK. They are more likely to



live in more deprived areas. Nearly a third of Britain's young core workers are parents.

Three in 10 of Britain's young core workers have qualifications at A-level or equivalent, which includes apprenticeships and vocational further education. Only one in four have a degree, compared with one-third of all employees and 40 per cent of young employees as a whole.

Britain's young core workers and work

Nearly 87 per cent of Britain's young core workers work in the private sector. Nearly half of Britain's young core workers work in retail, health and social care and accommodation and food services.

Britain's young core workers are less likely to be managers or supervisors than all young employees. And they are less likely than other young employees to have access to training.

Britain's young core workers are even less likely to be union members than all young employees: only 9.4 per cent are union members, including just 6.3 per cent in the private sector, where the vast majority work.

Key workplace challenges for Britain's young core workers

- Low pay
- Low-skilled, low-quality jobs
- Lack of training opportunities
- Over-qualification for the jobs available
- Weak opportunities for progression and promotion
- Underemployment
- Precarious working conditions
- Bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment
- Pressure on working parents
- No voice in the workplace

Britain's young core workers are often at the sharp end of labour market change. They have a worse experience of work than their parents did – even if they themselves may not identify that.

Trade unionism could offer Britain's young core workers significant benefits. But if unions do not speak their language and appeal to their values, unions will not be heard. The union movement needs to start with what Britain's young core workers need, rather than what unions want to give them.



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Section 2

Challenges

Challenges facing young workers

Challenges	Things a rep could think about
<p>Young workers often don't understand their workplace rights, which can make them vulnerable to poor employment practices. This can have a detrimental effect on the whole workplace, as new people coming in believe that "this is just the way we do things".</p> <p>They often have low expectations of work and don't identify as having problems – they think this is just what work is like.</p>	<p>Consider the rights that are relevant to them now, in this job. Do they know about their entitlement to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Breaks → Lunch → Annual leave → Sick leave → Representation from their union, individually or collectively → Access training opportunities → A proper contract <p>Are they often asked to work over their hours, come in early or take on extra work? Can you support them to challenge the employer about this, or ensure they are properly paid for the work they are doing?</p> <p>Young core workers say things like: "I have to be at work half an hour unpaid every day for briefings and debriefings, but overall, I'm treated fairly."</p>
<p>Young workers might be over-skilled and/or under-employed.</p>	<p>Does your organisation run a skills check? This is a great way to find out the skills people have that they aren't currently using at work but could be.</p> <p>Are there skills gaps in the organisation you could use to show a training need?</p> <p>See 'getting on, not getting by' on page 33 for more information on learning and training opportunities.</p>

<p>Young workers are often the lowest paid.</p>	<p>Join the campaign for the Living Wage if your employer isn't already signed up, and encourage your young workers to support it.</p> <p>Are pay scales for your workplace transparent and visible?</p> <p>Are people paid the same for equitable work? If not, why not?</p> <p>Are there training courses available to support young workers to gain the skills the employer wants, and therefore seek promotion?</p>
<p>Many young workers don't believe in 'jobs for life', so why bother with the union?</p>	<p>Our movement might not be able to guarantee jobs for life, but we can teach people the skills they need to be employed for life. Talk to your Union Learning Rep or branch Education Officer about the training and learning opportunities that might appeal to young workers in their current role, but also whatever they go on to do next.</p> <p>Union membership can and should be with us throughout our working lives. Signing up for the union on day one should be as natural as finding out where the toilets are.</p>
<p>Young workers are often working parents.</p>	<p>Can you help them negotiate with the employer over their working hours or shift patterns?</p> <p>Make sure they know their legal rights and any employer scheme to support working parents; carers leave, creche or childcare facilities, shared parental leave and the right to request flexible working.</p>
<p>Young workers' social lives are often online heavy, a trend which is likely to have increased as a result of the pandemic.</p>	<p>Perhaps formal branch meetings aren't the best way to attract young workers to our movement, at least in the first instance. Consider the options available to you to use social media – online platforms can be a great opportunity to engage. See page 22 for more detail.</p>



Case study: One young workers experience of unions

With young workers feeling the hardest impacts of this pandemic at work, there hasn't been a better time to join your union. Here's how a young activist fell into the world of trade unions at the age of 18.

I entered the workplace not having a clue what a union was.

By the time I finally landed myself a part time job in a local supermarket in East London, I was a shy and nervous 18-year-old. The supermarket recognised a union, however didn't mention this on my induction and so for my first 6 months I had no clue.

Building up to Easter, I had an operation which meant I couldn't walk for 10 weeks. I provided my manager with a surgeon's certificate, doctor's notes - the lot.

Still receiving daily texts, I was pressured back to work earlier than scheduled and on my first shift back, 5 minutes before my shift was up, I was told to go to the manager's office where to my surprise I entered my first ever disciplinary.

She asked if I was a member of a union and I remember saying "I don't know what that is."

They then asked if I was a member of a union – I responded: "I don't think so". "Well, you can't have a union rep then", and so the meeting went on.

Despite my shyness, I stood my ground and questioned why I was in a disciplinary when I received no indication that my operation would be a problem.

Management told me that they didn't know I was ill and would have to provide evidence.

It felt cynical as I personally handed in a letter from the doctor before the surgery and my mum had hand-delivered every doctor's note since.

The meeting was eventually adjourned at 11pm, an hour after my shift had actually finished. I got home that night feeling I was about to lose my sole source of income.

I warmed up some leftover pasta and quickly went to bed, as my next shift started at 8am. I was deeply upset.

After a restless and anxious night, I woke up and went downstairs for breakfast. My mum asked how I was, and I said I was fine but - a mother knows.

She asked if I was a member of a union and I remember saying "I don't know what that is".

“I’m also now a lot braver when taking on management.”

She told me about my granddad, a committed trade unionist and a member of what is now Unite.

With the knowledge that someone can stand by me and protect me in this meeting, I turned up to the work cafeteria early and asked an experienced colleague for info about the union.

Our meeting resumed and when I was asked “do you want a union rep?”, I said ‘yes’.

The look on management’s faces was priceless and in walked my rep who demanded they find my doctor’s notes. After one of them went to have “another look” surprise, surprise, they found all of them.

The meeting concluded pretty much at that point.

Since that moment, no matter the workplace, I always have and always will join my union.

I’m now a proud member of Unite and have delivered the ‘Unite in Schools’ programme to the next generation of workers.

I’m also now a lot braver when taking on management.

And one of my ambitions over the next few

years is to become a rep so that I can stand up for workers in the same way my reps have always done for me.

Unfortunately, stories like mine are rare.

Trade union density is low amongst young workers.

This is why employers find us easy prey when making redundancies or exploiting our naivety around our rights at work.

This is why it’s so important as a movement we devote time and energy to unionising the next generation of workers, reps and activists.

I love my union and I love this movement.



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Section 3

Engaging with young workers

Our future is more important than our past – engaging with young workers

When talking to colleagues who don't know much about trade unions, it is often tempting to remind them about our historic achievements: winning the weekend, holiday and maternity pay, health and safety legislation and so on. These wins were significant and important, however when trying to engage with young workers we need to consider what the union can do for them in the here and now, in their current role, and how it can continue to support them throughout their working lives.

Young workers may have a sense of futility about work. Perhaps they have tried to change things in the past, but they've done so alone and were unsuccessful. Young core workers say things like: "Why would I put my neck on the line to try and change something if it's never going to get better anyway?" It's vital to find out what their specific concerns are and see what can be done to resolve them. This might take some lateral thinking – if the issue is that their wages are too low, demanding a pay rise might not work (although it's worth a try!) but exploring the opportunities around training and up-skilling might put them in a better place to secure more work, or a promotion.

There are often mixed attitudes to unions amongst young workers. TUC research confirmed our fears that young core workers don't know much about unions. The vast majority hadn't heard the words 'trade union' and couldn't provide a definition. Where there was some knowledge, it came from older family members who are union members or from reports of strikes in the media. For these young core workers, there was a sense that unions are for 'other people'. There are also associations that unions are ineffective, irrelevant, bureaucratic, hierarchical and unrepresentative of wider society, as they are

seen as older, white and male. When young core workers with no prior knowledge were given a definition of a trade union, they liked the concept and said they wished there were unions they were eligible to join.

Some also had concerns that joining a union could mark you out as a troublemaker, could mean you were penalised informally at work or would find it harder to get your next job. Talk to your young workers in a clear, unpatronising way about what it really means to be part of our movement and how the union can help them in the here and now. We need to take young core workers on a psychological journey through different mindsets towards collective organising:

"I'm not sure I'm being treated/paid fairly."

"Something isn't right."

"It's not just me."

"I'm confident things can change."

"I want to do something/take action."

Issues

Because of young core workers' low expectations of the workplace, it is often challenging to get them to identify issues at work. They think their experience of work, which we as trade unionists could often see was exploitative or even illegal, is just how work is. In general, issues are felt locally, most commonly with managers. There is a lack of understanding of how decisions are made, for example a fatalism about pay. The most common feeling about pay is that 'it is what it is', that there is no one person who can decide to change it so it's not worth trying.

TUC research found that the top issues heard were about:

Rude and abusive customers or clients

Young core workers are on the frontline of service sectors and routinely exposed to unacceptable behaviour from customers or clients. Young core workers don't blame companies for not protecting them, but do feel hurt when the company then (typically) sides with the customer.

Favouritism from managers

We often hear "I'm fine because I'm mates with my manager": or, conversely, "the manager doesn't like me". Young core workers' managers' attitudes towards them impact on penalties around lateness, shift allocation, leave approval, flexible working and general atmosphere.

Unfairness and pay

Young core workers may feel more aggrieved at being paid less than someone else doing the same work or at having worked somewhere for years without a pay rise than they are at their objectively low pay overall. Unfairness is a useful communications frame for this group.

Shift work

Short notice of shifts leads to difficulty planning personal or family life, which can lead to mental health problems. One respondent to a TUC survey lost touch with her friends because she was never free at the same time as them. And it leads to physical health problems, with another respondent unable to make a dentist appointment because she could never be sure of keeping it. Those with childcare commitments are most likely to have a problem with lack of flexibility. Again, there is a sense of unfairness that young core workers' flexibility (e.g. to come in at short notice) isn't matched by the employer (e.g. to swap a shift).



Mapping

As a union rep you are no doubt familiar with mapping exercises and are aware that mapping is a strategic tool that can help you organise successfully. Done right, mapping should provide you with a picture of the workplace and areas you need to focus on to recruit members and activists, so your union is truly representative of the workforce. If you have young workers in your workplace, it's useful to know where they work, what roles they do and their shift patterns. Doing your homework on what you think might be their main concerns before that first conversation will help you be more informed and prove that the union understands them and their worries. For example:

- Do lots of young workers work more or fewer hours than they would like?
- Are they on zero-hours contracts?
- Are they paid a Living Wage?
- Is there a department or area that seems to have more absences than others?

How to map your workplace

There are number of different ways to map your workplace, a good starting point is to get hold of a staff rota or staff list and cross reference this with your union's membership lists. This will give you the basic information on who is or isn't a member.

Your map should be an on-going tool and you may want to consider collecting info on:

- Shifts (e.g., earlies, lates, nights)
- Shift start times (particularly useful if you need to speak to part time workers)
- Gender, age, BAME (black and minority ethnic) LGBTQ+, disability (finding out equality information may help show patterns for example, the workplace has a lot of younger workers, but none are union members.)
- Ex-members (and why they left, could these concerns be addressed?)
- Previous unions the worker has been in
- Reasons for not joining
- Reasons for not being active
- Union positions they hold or have held in the past
- Community groups they belong to

If you have children or members of your family about to join the world of work for the first time, speak to them about the union and the benefits of joining.

What is most important is that you undertake the mapping exercise with the intention of collecting as much usable information as you can to help you plan your recruitment and organising work and build a stronger workplace. There's no need to collect information that you have no way or intention of using.

Although it may seem like a big task, if you get members and reps in each section/ department involved collecting the information for you, it won't be so onerous. You don't have to collect the information all in one go. You can build up your database over time, focusing on areas, floors of buildings or even buildings themselves. You can then extend it as necessary and amend it as and when the information needs updating.

Understanding people's community affiliations or passionate political interests could be a great way to get them involved in the union.

Causes like Black Lives Matter, Extinction Rebellion and LGBTQ+ rights have engaged young people and given them a platform to make their voices heard. These issues are trade union issues and unions can benefit greatly from engaging with young workplace activists in these fields.

The Wales TUC has a collection of resources that may help you engage with younger members on a range of issues. These include but are not limited to:

- A green economy and a just transition
- Mental health in the workplace
- Problem gambling
- Tackling the far right







Section 4








Communicating with young workers

Using social media to its fullest

A social media network is an online platform that people use to build social networks with other people based on common interests and/or real-life connections. Networks are normally based on communication in different formats and sharing a type of media, for example posts, photographs, videos, blogs and more.

The use of social media is a great way to engage with all members, not just young workers. It should be considered “in addition to” not “instead of” meaningful face-to-face interaction.

These are the main platforms in the UK now, but new ones appear all the time so it’s important to think critically about if and how we can use new social media platforms.

Icon	Platform	Description
	Facebook	A social sharing network with over 44 million users in the UK. You can share posts, videos, photographs, and time limited story content.
	YouTube	A social network dedicated to video sharing and viewing with over 35 million UK users each month.
	WhatsApp	An instant messaging platform with voice and video calls as well as group messaging functionality.
	Instagram	A photograph and (short) video sharing social media platform, with a story-telling feature, which allows time limited content to be uploaded. Instagram has 30 million UK users.
	Twitter	A micro-blogging platform that allows users to share short snippets of information in a post (up to 280 characters) with 15 million users.
	Snapchat	A platform where users can send images and videos only available to view for a short lifespan with 18 million UK users.
	TikTok	A video sharing social network. The social media platform is used to make a variety of short-form videos, from genres like dance, comedy, and education, that have a duration from fifteen seconds to one minute.

Communicate with young people

Social media provides the ability to communicate with young people, enabling conversations to happen outside of face-to-face meetings, as well as opportunities for relationship building and, where others are involved, a sense of community. There are different ways you can use social media to communicate with young people:

- Broadcasting or marketing communication - through an organisational account like a Facebook page or Twitter account to tell people about the work you're doing. For example, this could be used to:
 - Let young people know about new opportunities they could get involved in
 - Supply updates about your project
 - Showcase work created by the group or young people you support.
- Group communication - through a group set up on a social media platform – for example a WhatsApp or Facebook group. This is a good way to build up a peer support network and keep the group of young people you're working with informed about what's going on, new opportunities and other updates – a way to share information and keep connected without face-to-face contact.
- One-to-one messaging – for example in a private WhatsApp message or through direct message on an account such as Twitter or Facebook. This type of communication should be thought about carefully and the necessary precautions should be put in place, for example how will these communications be recorded? Think about how this type of interaction would happen in an offline setting and mirror best

practice online. Remember that things can be interpreted differently online where you don't have tone and body language to help in getting your message across.

You can use social media to shout about your union work to your existing audience and to try to engage new people. As we've seen, there are a range of platforms that you could use, but don't feel under pressure to have a presence on each one! The most important questions to ask yourself when selecting the platform are:

- Are the people we are hoping to talk to on the platform? The best way to find this out is to ask them!
- Do we have the right skills to manage the platform? Do you know how to use the platform and understand its different functions? If not, talk to your ULR – there are plenty of free resources available to show you how to get the best out of social media.
- Do we have enough time and resources to put into making our presence on this platform a success? Some platforms require more time to ensure your content is heard or seen, for example starting a page from scratch on Facebook can be difficult without having budget to pay for boosted posts.
- Do we have the right content to make a success of this platform? For example, Instagram has high quality photographs. Will you be able to take enough photographs of this quality that are relevant to your audience to make the platform a success?

Answering these questions will help you to decide which platform might be best for you to use. Don't be afraid to try a platform for a few months and decide it's not for you and then move on to something different.

Be Aware!

If you are using a social media account that is not part of your organisation to communicate with colleagues, consider creating a work social media account if you can. It is important not to blur the boundary between your private and work life, keeping them separate is important. If it is not possible to create a work profile, this is an important question to discuss with staff – what is acceptable to them and to your organisation?

Most trade unions have dedicated staff whose role is to deal with all aspects of communications, including social media. Speak to your union's communications people about help to grow your branch pages or accounts.



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Section 5

Growing the union

Building the branch

The most important time to speak to new starters is in the first few weeks in employment. A friendly face early on in someone's new job can go a long way to building a relationship. We need to make early contact, both at the individual level, so that new starters know who their local rep is, and collectively, via formal induction sessions. Many unions will have formal agreements with the employer about attending inductions sessions. It's an extremely useful way to engage with potential new members. Your union may even have resources you can download to take with you. Check out their website for this information.

If you haven't got access to an induction session keep an ear out for news of new starters and be ready to make a friendly introduction.

Spotting everyday recruitment opportunities

How do you find daily situations where you can strike up conversations with potential new members? There are some simple steps to consider.

- Think about the journey you make each day to and from your workstation/desk, including the places you walk or travel to and the staff you meet on the way.
- Using an average day, make a list of where you go, how many people you meet and who they are.
- Go through your list and highlight any opportunities you have to talk to staff about the union.



For example, you may walk through a reception area but not know whether the people who work there are union members, or you may go to the staff canteen and meet people informally during breaks.

- Think about how you can strike up conversations with colleagues about joining the union that doesn't take them away from their daily routine.
- For colleagues who don't leave their desks often, consider how you can communicate with them using email or the phone instead.

Once your list is complete, make a point of chatting informally to colleagues about union activities and the benefits of joining.



Get creative

Let's face it, the old ways of doing things are not reaching young workers in the way we would like, so if we really want to show younger workers the union is for them, then we need to shake things up a little. Below are a few ideas that could help get you on your way.

New voices

Why not put "new voices" as a standing item on your union agenda and then invite a guest speaker to kick off each union meeting? Having a new voice at each meeting could be a breath of fresh air to a meeting and draw in new ideas and interests. Speakers could include local campaign groups or activists, high profile individuals or politicians, or perhaps union officials working on specific campaigns could come and update workers. The Wales TUC have staff that can come and speak about relevant toolkits or campaigns. You could also consider having monthly themes for the new voice guest, such as green issues, mental health, problem gambling or learning.

You could also use a theme that speaks to young workers. Some unions have "wages not based on ages" campaigns. The campaign challenges the assertion that in regard to the national minimum wage, different age groups should be paid different rates. Could this be a suitable organising topic for your union?

Solidarity

People band together under adversity or to celebrate wins. Picking some easy wins and getting younger members on board at that point shares in that success and

shows younger members what can be achieved. There are lots of interesting and successful ways to do this. The TUC toolkits are one way to drive a new initiative or you could try something completely different. The TUC summer patrols offer a way for young members to engage and recruit new members. Is this something your union could be involved in or replicate?

With any workplace campaign it is important to manage expectations. Be honest with members about the chances of success. People gravitate towards a successful campaign and showing how together we can win is a great recruitment tool. Equally, not winning can have a damaging effect on how people view the union. That's not to say we shouldn't fight for things; if we don't fight, we don't win, but be honest with members about the chances of success. Nothing is more off-putting than being told something is a sure fire win and then losing.

Create meaningful space

This space can be physical (a place to meet) or digital, ideally both. We need to ensure that the space is inclusive and welcomes everyone, as unions stand for all. We create this space so young workers can interact with the union in a place they feel comfortable. It's good to mix it up, so some ideas could be weekend schools, gigs or family events like trips to a beach or theme park, going bowling and so on. Not everyone drinks alcohol so try not to make the events all focused around drink, as this can exclude some people. Free food on the other hand is always a winner for any age group! You can also have events at different times of the day or on different days. People's time commitments vary so by

having a spread you're more likely to engage with more people, for example some people might struggle with childcare on certain days but that might not be an issue on others. Try different options and see what works for you.

The TUC recently hosted a webinar on "[finding the next generation of union reps](#)" which has some useful first-person accounts of other things you might want to try.

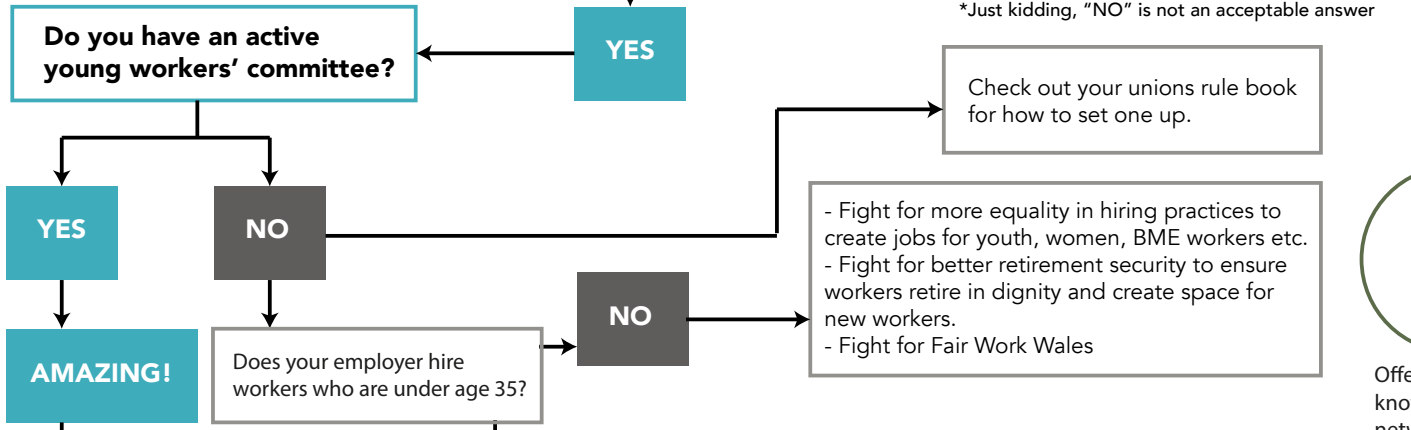
Things you might want to talk about with your union

As we've seen, the old way of doing things is no longer effective when it comes to engaging young workers, and there are things your union could be doing to help you too. They might want to consider:

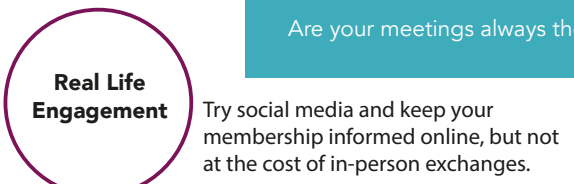
- how they support workers, the offer and joining journey in unrecognised workplaces – which is where most young workers work
- whether they can make an individualised offer upfront, as a way of bringing younger workers into the movement – and then take young workers on a journey towards collectivism

→ whether new members could get instant access to support on joining. There needs to be a consistent approach across the movement to providing support and representation to young workers at the point where they realise they need us. Some unions already offer instant support to staff in companies that are organising priorities. Young workers could be seen as a priority organising target in the same way. Of course, unions can't be sustainable if members then leave immediately after benefiting from advice and support. But there are innovative mechanisms that could protect unions from this – eg members who receive advice within their first three months could repay the cost if they leave within a year.

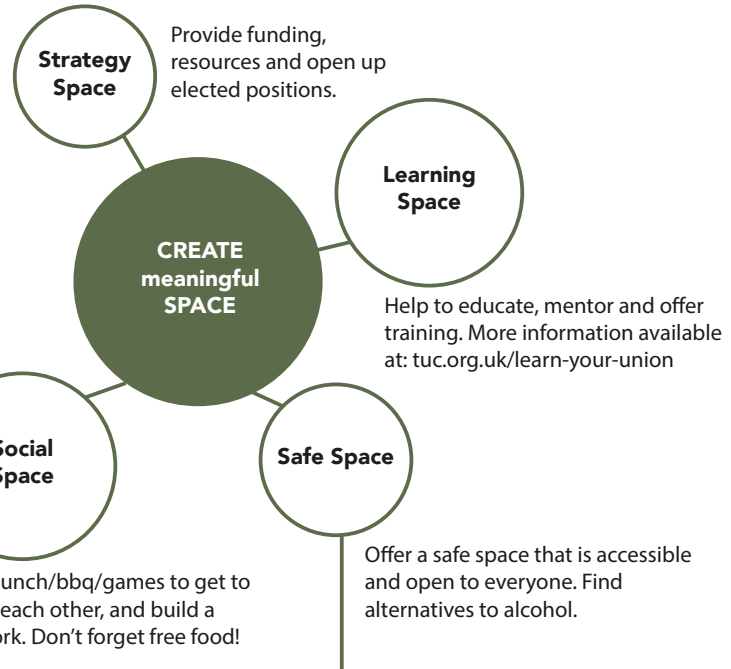
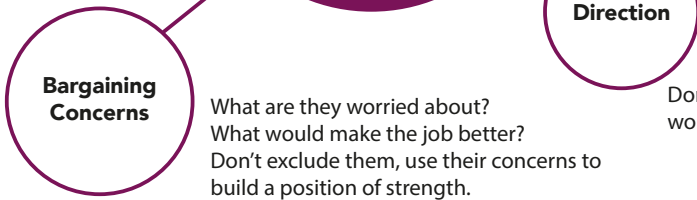
So, you want to engage YOUNG WORKERS?



JUST ONE MINUTE
Tokenising: the symbolic inclusion of young workers without giving meaningful voice or power. It's disrespectful and alienating.
INSTEAD, do this:



Don't speak on behalf of young workers, just pass the mic!



THIS IS IMPORTANT
If someone is excluded or made to feel uncomfortable because of their gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, ability or anything else, that creates a barrier and prevents participation. As a union, it is our responsibility to crush oppression and make everyone welcome.



Young workers are real people, and part of the union! Use the tools and information you have as long as a long-term union activist to reach out, open doors, and...

build the union!
P.S. Loving free food is not restricted to young workers

Share the rep load

It is not uncommon for a union rep to wear more than one “hat”. To be for example a union rep and a H&S rep, or a ULR and an equality rep. Often these roles can complement each other and there can be advantages to doing this, but its far better where possible to help build a strong branch structure where many hands make a lighter load. More reps mean a more sustainable branch structure, but it also creates an opening where a young rep can cut their teeth with the support of more experienced reps around them. There is risk that a single rep carrying many rep roles denies a young worker a development opportunity to grow into a great rep that will help your union. Ask yourself, can I give one of my roles to someone else, and support them to grow? Will having another set of hands help me manage my workload better?

Mentoring and shadowing

If you can, try and find a young worker you’re able to speak to easily and regularly – one on the same shift pattern as you or in the same office would be ideal – and once they’re a member ask if they’d like to learn more about the rep role you do. If you work in a large workplace, it might be worth formalising the mentoring system to provide fair opportunity for all.

Confidentiality around personal cases and disciplinaries is of utmost importance of course, but there’s no reason you couldn’t explain to them the processes involved. With other union work – updating policies, branch meetings, events and so on – it would be very easy to keep them up to date of how things are going and invite them along to meetings. It’s a great way for someone new to the movement to understand how things work, without them having to take on the rep role themselves straight away.

The world of trade unionism can be quite intimidating to many new members, there is a lot of jargon, procedures, and committees for example. We know these procedures and committees ensure that we act fairly and democratically, but to an outsider they may seem like difficult barriers to overcome. We should explain how these systems work in a way that shows their value in as simple language as possible. It’s also not a bad idea from time to time to think “are there easier ways to get the same outcome?” when it comes to the union’s ways of working. We should try and avoid using jargon as much as possible, and where we do, try to explain it, especially if we know there are newcomers in the room.

Succession planning

Your last day as a rep shouldn’t be your last day in work. The best gift you can leave your union on retiring or leaving is a healthy branch and the way to do that is to build space for your replacement. You can do this by stepping down from your role a year or two before you retire and help to support the young worker(s) you’ve previously been mentoring. Use that time to pass on your valuable experiences and knowledge to help build the union for the next generation of members.

7



Section 7

Learning and development

Getting on, not getting by

Unions should be seen as more than an “insurance policy” if things go bad, but as a supportive collective that enables us to have a safe, fulfilling and rewarding career. Young workers want to get on in life, and unions can play a key role in making that happen.

funding can be used for members and non-members alike, so no one in the workplace need be excluded. Talk to your union to find out what’s available for your workplace, and consider the needs and wants of your young workers when planning courses.

WULF

The Wales Union Learning Fund, paid for by Welsh Government, provides trade unions in Wales funding to pay for learning and skills development in the workplace. Projects run for 2-3 years at a time and can support all sorts of workplace learning including IT, literacy and numeracy, technical skills and mental health awareness and support. The



PLAs

Personal Learning Accounts are ideal for young workers and can be a great 'next step' from WULF-supported learning. Anyone who meets the following criteria is eligible:

- Live in Wales
- Want to gain skills/qualifications in priority sectors
- Be 19 years old or over

In addition, they must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be employed (including self-employed) earning under the median income (£26,000), or
- A furloughed worker, or
- A worker on a zero-hour contract, or
- Agency staff, or
- At risk of being made redundant, or
- Employed and been negatively affected by the economy, for example the hospitality industry

A huge range of fully funded courses is available and are delivered either face-to-face or online by colleges and learning providers all over Wales.

Kickstart

The UK government introduced a new national £2 billion Kickstart scheme in July 2020. The intention is to support around 250,000 jobs for six months for 16-24-year-olds.

Union reps can play a key role in supporting young people who have entered their workplace through this scheme.

If your workplace has a Kickstarter the help and support they could receive from your union will be invaluable. Speak to them about their career aspirations and see how WULF and or PLAs can help them achieve those dreams. This might be the first time that young person has entered the world of work and it's a great opportunity to show them exactly how a union can support them. There's more information on the scheme on the Wales TUC website.

Apprenticeships

Anyone who lives in Wales and is over the age of 16 can apply to be an apprentice. There is no upper age limit.

Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study. Typically, an apprentice will:

- work alongside experienced staff
- gain job specific skills
- gain a qualification
- earn a wage and get holiday pay
- get time to study (usually one day a week)

Apprenticeships take 1 to 4 years to complete depending on their level, and currently are fully funded by Welsh Government.

Employers can get help with the costs of recruiting one too, so they are a great way to get new

people into the workplace, or help those who are already there to progress.

If you already have apprentices make sure they are part of your mapping exercise (see page 20) and talk to them about the benefits of our movement.



Our movement needs us all to step up

The message of this toolkit is a simple one, even if the challenge is not. That is without young workers all the hard-fought wins in the proud history of our movement could be lost. Without young workers stepping in behind us as reps and members, our colleagues risk not having the voice they had before. The options are to do nothing and fail or engage and win. Trade unions have never been afraid of a battle and we know when we apply our collective work ethic and knowledge, we can be successful. This is a battle we can't afford to lose, and as trade union reps if we can give a voice to those young workers in our workplaces, we can leave our union in safe hands.

We also know that with new members come new ideas, new ways of doing things and new ways of winning. Nothing worthwhile ever comes easy, but together we could build a movement ready to take on the challenges of the future.

Useful links & bibliography

A green recovery and a just transition

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/green>

Black lives matter

<https://www.blacklivesmatter.uk/>

Extinction rebellion

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/>

Getting by and getting on- a guide for reps about issues affecting young workers

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC_Getting%20by%20and%20getting%20on%20WEB.pdf

Learn with your union

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/learn-your-union>

Living for the Weekend. Understanding Britain's young core workers

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/living-weekend>

Organise 2020: How can we find the next generation of activists?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWOYZ8EMydl>

Tackling the far right

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/farright>

The TUC Summer Patrol - inspiring a new generation of trade unionists

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/tuc-summer-patrol-inspiring-new-generation-trade-unionists>

Trade union membership rises by 100,000 in a single year – but challenges remain

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/trade-union-membership-rises-100000-single-year-challenges-remain>

Wales TUC mental health toolkit

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Mental%20health%20and%20the%20workplace%20toolkit%20ENG_0.pdf

Wales TUC Problem gambling toolkit

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/problem-gambling>

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This publication is also available in the Welsh language.

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This toolkit will be regularly updated, so we would welcome any comments or suggestions on how it could be improved. Please let us know if you notice anything that is out of date, unclear, or that you think may need correcting or updating.

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