

Effective campaigning

A UNISON GUIDE



UNISON
the public service union



Steve Forrest/Insight-Visual

Marching in support of the NHS.

Introduction



UNISON is a proud campaigning organisation committed to defending public services and our members who provide them.

UNISON members are proud of the vital services they provide for their communities. Those services are now under threat as the real cost of paying for the economic crisis caused by the greed of the bankers becomes clear. If we want to defend those services and deliver our vision of a fair society, where everyone has access to quality public services provided by

valued staff - then every branch and every member of the union will need to step up and become active campaigners.

Whether you are looking for ways to campaign locally as part of a national UNISON campaign like A Million Voices for Public Services, or if you want to work effectively with other organisations to defend local services, or if your branch needs to take action to prevent job losses or privatisation – this guide will help.

It is packed full of ideas and tips for running an effective campaign.

It explains what resources are available to help you with your campaign, how to use a local issue to recruit members to UNISON and how to get your message out in the media and to opinion-formers.

We have also a case study featuring the successful campaign run by UNISON's Lincolnshire Health Branch which shows how our campaigns can deliver real results for our members and the communities they serve.

UNISON aims to continue its proud record of effective campaigning. Use this guide and get involved in our future successes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Prentis." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Prentis
General secretary



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Using the plinth in Trafalgar Square to highlight UNISON's 'Not a Silent Witness' campaign against domestic violence.

What is campaigning?

Campaigning is about achieving change. When you campaign you are trying to persuade people to take a particular course of action in relation to a particular issue. You are also trying to change people's attitudes or opinions. This means when you campaign you need to be clear about:

- what you want done
- why it needs to be done
- who you want to do it.

Campaigning is more than organising clever publicity stunts. Campaigning means having a clear aim or purpose, knowing what change you want to achieve and what is required to bring that change about. Without such an aim, you have no campaign.

When you campaign your tools are information, argument and publicity.

Campaigning also means you need to be clear about:

- what message you want to get across
- how you are going to get this message across.

Campaigning therefore requires:

- planning – to work out the campaign's aims and what needs to be done by whom
- organisation – to be able to do the right things at the right time to help achieve the campaign's aims

- resources – the people, time, information, facilities, equipment and money to support your campaign
- evaluation – have you achieved your aims? What worked well, what worked less well? What lessons have you learnt for next time?

Elsewhere in this guide you will find a case study featuring a UNISON branch campaign to defeat plans to turn a local hospital into a foundation trust. The branch successfully used the campaign techniques set out here – we hope your branch does the same.

Planning your campaign

Set up a planning team

Campaigns don't emerge out of thin air. Nor do they exist by head office decree. Campaigns can only take place if groups of committed individuals come together to plan and achieve change. The branch is a good focus for this.

One person alone cannot plan a campaign. What is needed is a planning team to share the work and run the campaign - branches are in a good position to set up such a team. The branch secretary or workplace convenor will know where to find information and will have a network of contacts. They will also be familiar with the stewards and activists and their respective skills and strengths.

Other members of the team should be workplace reps or stewards, particularly those from workplaces which may be key campaign targets or important sources of support. Remember that your campaign should be open to all activists, so stewards and active members should be part of your team whenever possible. It is also a good idea to include communications and publicity experts and branch admin staff where possible as they often have detailed awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of a campaign plan.

Don't make your planning team too big. Six to eight committed people is the maximum you need, otherwise you will just be setting up an unwieldy committee. If you have lots of people wanting to get involved then you may be able to set up several campaign teams, each responsible for running a different campaign or part of a larger campaign. In this case you may need to have some sort of co-ordinating committee at branch level.

Attendance at branch meetings should not be a condition of being a member of a campaign team. Inviting a steward or rep active in their workplace to join a campaign can be a way of drawing them into the broader union organisation.

Think ahead

It is important that you plan your campaign carefully. Every day, week or month spent planning increases your chances of success.

You need to ask yourself:

- what do we want?
- can we achieve it?
- when do we want it by?
- is this a realistic expectation?
- how will we measure our achievement?

A useful way of answering these questions is to set yourself 'SMART' objectives. SMART stands for:

Specific - a clear, precise outcome, not a vague, general intention

Measurable - the campaign should result in clear, noticeable change

Achievable - it should be possible for people to do it

Realistic - you should have the commitment and resources to see it through

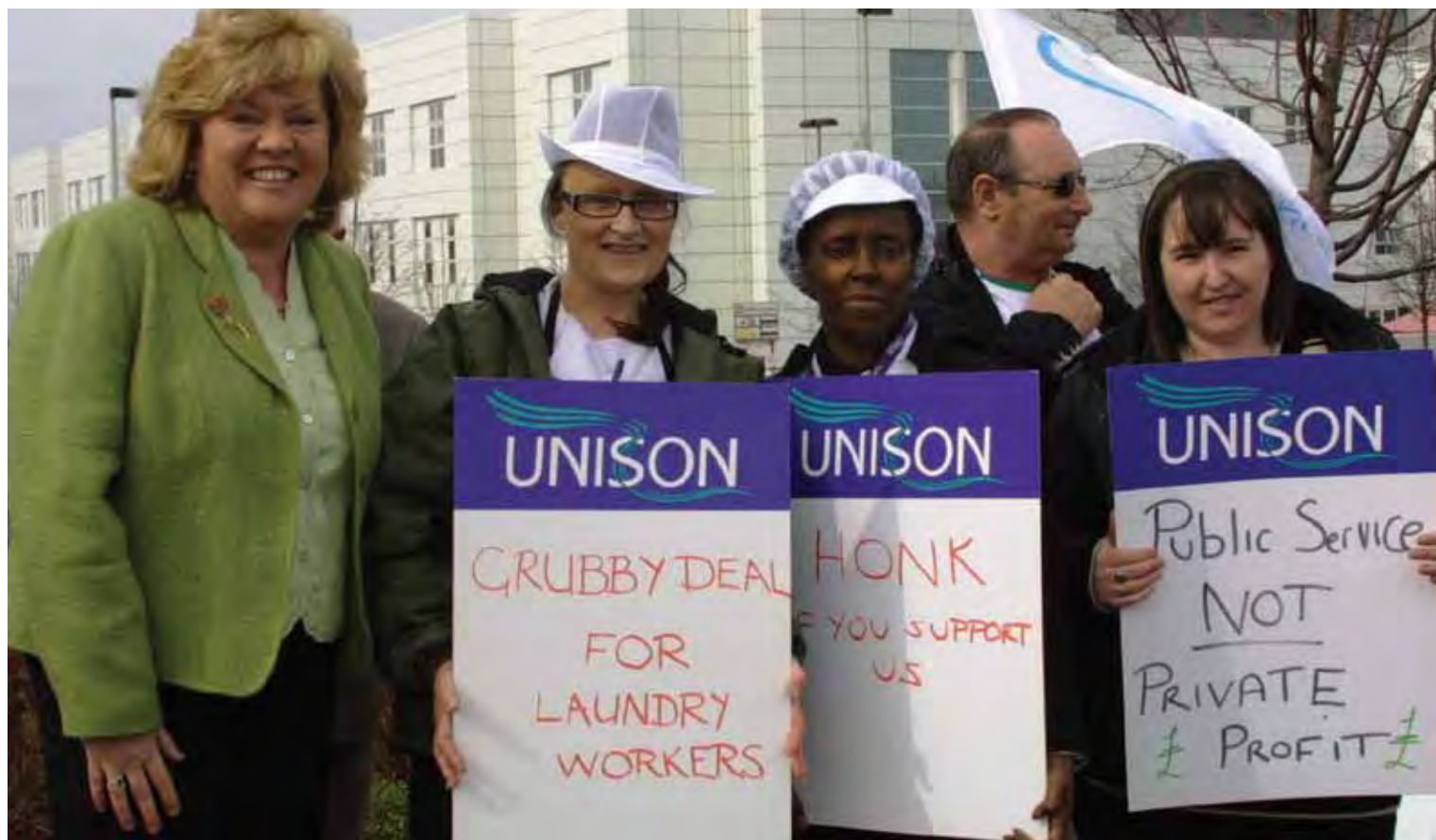
Timed - it should have a completion date built in.

If you have SMART objectives you will be able to monitor whether your campaign is successful according to whether you are achieving your objectives.

Choose a campaign issue

You will need to identify clearly what issues you wish to campaign on. You could:

- choose an issue identified by UNISON nationally for your campaign
- choose an issue identified by another organisation, such as the TUC, and supported by UNISON nationally



A week of campaigning in the West Midlands against a private catering and cleaning company refusing to implement Agenda for Change terms and conditions.

- use a new piece of legislation
- choose an issue that you know branch members care about as this will make it easier to engage them in your campaign.

Decide what form the campaign will take

Once you have considered all your options in detail, you will be able to make an informed decision about the form of your campaign. You may decide to choose several of the options and use them at different stages.

Here are some points to consider:

- your **approach** – it should be positive and constructive.
- your **arguments** – they should be thoroughly researched, factually correct and convincing.
- your **presentation** – it should be clear, well thought-out, free of spelling mistakes and other inaccuracies, factual, free of personal attacks or empty rhetoric and written in language that can be easily understood by the people you want to read it
- your **tactics** – they should be consistent with, and relevant to, the campaign, they should further the campaign objectives, they should not alienate the people you are trying to persuade, they should be non-violent and they should be lawful
- your **campaign base** – it should be as broad as possible and include other interested groups who can add to your resources and influence.

Draw up a plan of action

Obviously you will want to have a clear plan of action. You should already have worked out how long the campaign is going to take, so you now need to draw up a timetable.

Look at all your campaign ideas and plan how and when you will use them over the period. Don't use all your ideas in one go. You will want to keep up the campaign momentum, so you should keep some of your best ideas for later in the campaign.

You should also work out what resources you will need and how you are going to get hold of them. If you need to book rooms or equipment, make sure that you don't leave it till the last minute or you could find that someone else has already reserved them.

If you need to order supplies of leaflets from UNISON's communications department or design and print your own – give yourselves plenty of time (doing your own can take a lot longer than you think). You can use the union's online print service which enables you to use pre-existing templates and your own local information.

Finally, you should agree who is doing what and make sure that everyone understands what their responsibilities are and when they have to do things. An action checklist will be invaluable for this. You should ensure that it is filled in and that it is checked regularly.

Keep everybody informed

Information and publicity are the lifeblood of campaigning. People working on your campaign need to be kept in touch with what is happening. You can ensure this by having regular campaign meetings (but not at the expense of campaign activities) or by producing a regular or as-and-when campaign newsletter. Emails and telephone calls are also a quick way of passing on information.

You also need to let your campaign audience know what is happening. Newsletters can be circulated beyond the circle of campaign workers. Union noticeboards can be used in the workplace. Email updates should be considered. You could use a campaign event, such as a public meeting, to report progress. You might be able to get stories in the local press or on TV.

It is particularly important to let people know about any campaign successes you have had. This keeps up the morale of the members working on the campaign and lets your audience know what you have achieved.

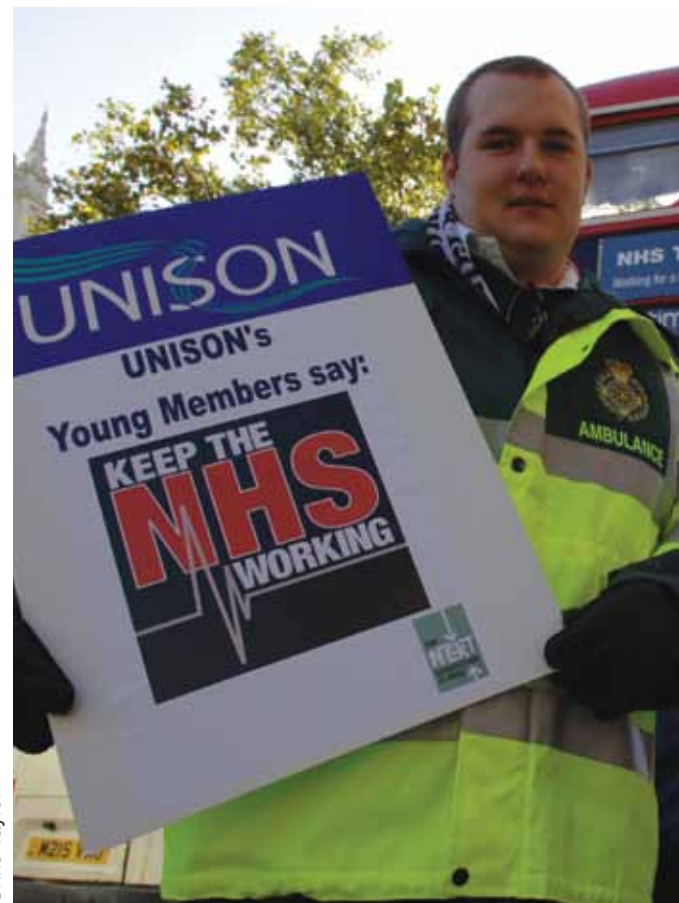
Review the action plan

To be absolutely sure that everything is going to plan, you should review the action plan at regular intervals. You should ask:

- are we on target?
- do we have sufficient resources?
- are our objectives still achievable?
- are any changes needed?

Know when to stop

Some campaigns may be short and sweet. Others may run for a long time, perhaps with periods of more intense activity broken up by more inactive periods while you regroup, rethink your plan and revitalise yourself for the next phase. There should be a time in any



Chris Taylor

Campaigning against the cuts in the NHS brought all parts of the union together.

campaign, however, when you decide to call a halt because:

- you have achieved your campaign aims, or at least enough of them to claim some success
- it is obvious your campaign is going nowhere and you would be better expending your energies on other campaigns or activities.

If you started off your campaign with a set of SMART objectives you will be able to judge when to call a halt to your campaign more easily. Some questions you can ask yourself are:

- have we achieved all our objectives?
- if not, have we achieved enough of them to count as a reasonable success?

- can we realistically continue the campaign?
- can we relaunch the campaign?
(This means developing a new campaign plan, not simply ploughing on regardless and calling it a relaunch)
- have we failed to get what we wanted?

Whatever you decide, it is important to let everybody who is involved in the campaign know what is happening. You should also make sure that you thank everybody who has helped in the campaign. Not only is this a courteous thing to do, but you may also want their help in future campaigns.

If your campaign has been successful make sure you publicise this, perhaps with a celebratory event.

It is very unlikely that you will have achieved nothing from a campaign. Moving things forward can be slow process. It is important to recognise what successes you have had, even if they fall short of your original objectives.

This is important for your own morale and that of other activists or members. For example, your goal may have been to get everyone trained. But after a lot of effort, what you have finally achieved is an agreement to a meeting to discuss training with management. This is a success, a step in the right direction. It would not have happened without the union, so make sure people know this.

Evaluate the campaign

When the campaign is over, you should meet to evaluate it. There will be useful lessons for any future campaigns you may wish to plan. You will need to ask:

- was the campaign a success?
- did we achieve all our objectives?
- what worked well?
- what mistakes did we make?
- what could we have done better?
- what lessons have we learned?



Case study – United Lincolnshire Hospital NHS Trust

The issue

When United Lincolnshire Hospital NHS Trust decided to apply for foundation trust status it did not appreciate the full extent of the opposition it was to meet from UNISON's Lincolnshire health branch. Members were determined to defeat these proposals, even though they knew it would be a hard fight as most foundation trusts in the country have been driven through in spite of staff and community opposition.

The campaign

The branch kicked off the campaign with a newsletter that it sent out to all members and to all workplace reps. The reps then started talking to non-members about the trust's plans. This helped the branch to assess how staff reacted to the plans and how much support there was for a campaign against foundation trust status.

At the same time, the branch wrote to all members explaining why UNISON was against the foundation trust proposals and setting out what individual members could do to help with the campaign. Members were invited to sign and send an enclosed standard letter to opt

out of the proposed 'staff constituency' that foundation trust status would establish.

Petition forms were included with the letter and people were encouraged to get colleagues, family and friends to sign in opposition to the foundation trust.

Members were also encouraged to talk to all colleagues about the trust's plans and encourage those not in the union to join and add their support to the campaign.

Finally, members were given UNISON contact details to use if they wanted to get involved in the campaign or if they wanted to receive regular campaign updates.

Once word about the campaign started spreading, the branch organised open forums at all trust sites, for all staff, so they could find out why UNISON was opposing the foundation trust and how they could join the campaign. This proved very successful in terms of recruiting new members and activists.

The branch designed badges which were handed out at the open forums, and sent to all members and people were encouraged to wear them with their uniforms as a sign of protest. This raised the profile of UNISON in the workplace and generated media interest in the campaign.

The branch recognised that this campaign wasn't just about NHS staff, but involved NHS users too. So, retired UNISON members were drafted to take the petition to five towns across Lincolnshire and get members of the public to show their opposition to the foundation trust plans.

The employer fights back

The trust was using its line managers to put the case for foundation trust status and this was intimidating some staff and preventing them from becoming active in the campaign. So, the branch decided to meet this challenge head on by employing an organiser to research the damaging effects of foundation trusts across the UK. This dossier proved



Georgia Brown



Georgia Brown

very effective at reassuring the membership that these plans needed to be opposed and gave them the confidence to challenge the employer's view. It has now been used by other branches across the region, who are also fighting foundation trust status.

One other benefit from this research showed that the most effective way for the staff to show their opposition to foundation trust plans is for them to opt out of the 'staff constituency' in an organised way – a lesson that is useful for the whole of UNISON.

The campaign heats up

The next step was for the branch to apply to the union's General Political Fund for money to spend on billboard advertising to raise public awareness of the campaign, on bright campaign T-shirts and towards the cost of a demonstration/publicity stunt in Grantham.

Lobbying decision-makers

While campaigning on the ground took off, branch members started a letter-writing campaign that they ran in partnership with their regional organiser.

Letters created by the branch and regional organiser were sent to senior trust officers

asking them to demonstrate that the trust had properly consulted members of the public and community representative groups before applying for foundation trust status and that the trust's finances were stable enough to sustain an application for foundation trust status.

During the lengthy wait for responses to their letters, UNISON members used local bargaining mechanisms to raise their concerns about foundation trust status and patient care with managers. After the employer failed to respond effectively to these concerns, the branch escalated these issues to the Healthcare Commission.

The outcome

Following the high profile campaign by the branch, the Department of Health stepped in and concluded that it was not the right time for the trust to take forward its application. The Strategic Health Authority (SHA) launched an audit and investigation into the trust – branch members were invited to give the views of the workforce at this investigation – and subsequently senior trust officers left their posts.

UNISON resources to help with your campaign

Political fund

UNISON's political fund is divided into two sections: the General Political Fund and Labour Link. Both sections promote UNISON policies and participate in taking our campaigns forward.

General Political Fund

UNISON uses the General Political Fund (GPF) to pay for political campaigning at branch, regional and national level as well as for research and lobbying in Parliament to pursue UNISON's objectives and priorities. This campaigning activity may be of a political, though not party political, nature. For further information see unison.org.uk/gpf/index.asp

Most of the high profile political campaign work you see from UNISON is paid for by the GPF.

But it's not just the big things that the GPF funds. All sorts of national and local projects and campaigns benefit from receiving funding this way eg anti-racist events, local campaigns against privatisation, Million Voices etc.

Any branch that has members who contribute to the GPF can apply for financial support for a local campaign or activity. Requests for GPF money to support campaigning must demonstrate how the proposed activity supports the objectives and must be submitted using the standard form (unison.org.uk/acrobat/B1242.pdf) to the regional secretary. Regions can agree branch bids up to £5,000. Bids above that amount and regional bids are to be submitted to the national committee, which meets on a regular basis. Email: g.politicalfund@unison.co.uk

Labour Link

The UNISON Labour Link fund is affiliated to the Labour Party and this allows the union to play an active and important role in the Labour Party at every level.

UNISON lobbies the Labour Party through the policy forum process, at party conferences, in the constituencies and through the UNISON group of MPs at Westminster. UNISON Labour Link branch officers, national staff and lay members work closely with UNISON's different service groups, regions and other parts of UNISON to get our members' concerns onto the Labour agenda.

Branches with Labour Link members can form a Labour Link section within the branch, which can affiliate to the local Labour party and send representatives and motions to party meetings to win support for UNISON's aims. They can also elect a branch UNISON Labour Link officer who can act as the key point of contact to ensure members remain informed. Branches can also elect delegates to represent UNISON in the general management committees of local Labour parties, where policy, campaigning and organisational issues are agreed and where there are important links with local councillors and MPs.

Branches with Labour Link members can use its services through the regional political contact officer and Labour Link committees, and the National Labour Link Committee. An annual forum determines the Labour Link objectives for the future year.

Separate, but similar, arrangements exist in Scotland and Cymru/Wales.

More information can be found at unison.org.uk/labourlink/index.asp

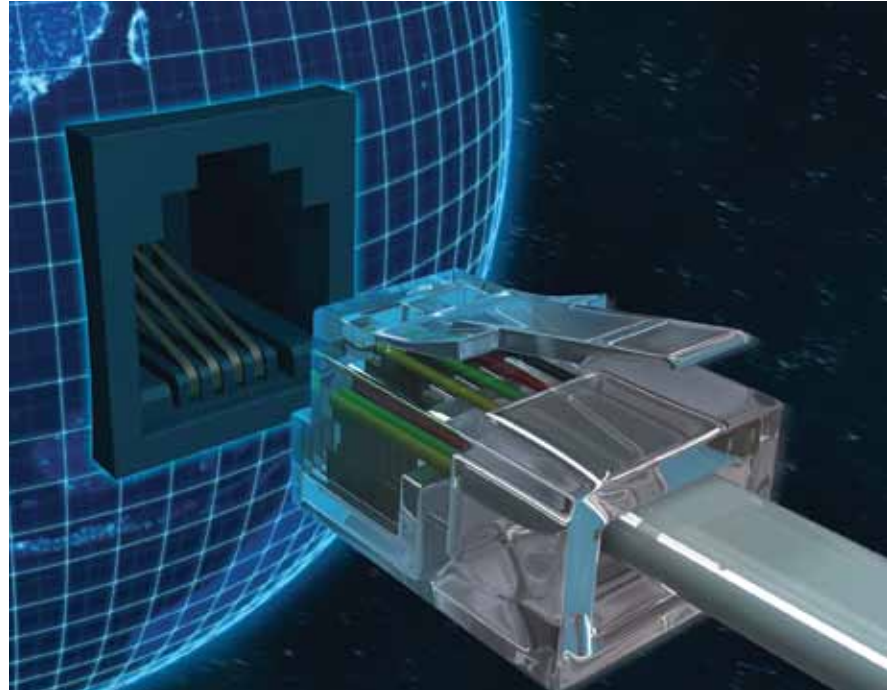
Regional pool

The regional pool (guidelines at unison.org.uk/acrobat/13875.pdf and leaflet stock number 2282) exists to provide additional financial support to branches to undertake planning and activities aimed at building the branch's organisation in line with UNISON's objectives. There is no limit to individual claims which may be for purchases, to provide staff or to fund the release of activists for a defined organising project, or other costs necessary to

meet the objectives of your proposal. Claims will be considered by an appropriate regional committee and the branch will be accountable to show how it has used any award made. Please use the guidelines to ensure you send the right information with your application.

Design and print via the online print service

This gives you the opportunity to drop your own locally relevant text into professionally designed templates with the correct UNISON branding. There are a number of templates on the site, ranging from letterheads to campaign leaflets, posters and pull-up stands. The aim is to roll this out nationally from July 2010. For more information email yourprint@unison.co.uk.



Strategic campaigning course

A UNISON training module on strategic campaigning can assist branch officers in the planning and delivery of a campaign. Contact your regional education officer for more information. The following sections are extracts from the course.

Checklist from UNISON's strategic campaigning course - 11 steps towards an effective campaign

1. Organise a worker communication system

Set up a communication network – agree how you will keep in touch with your colleagues, and who will be the campaign lead in each area.

2. Analyse union and employer strength and weakness

Carry out a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities threats analysis, including how to:

- maximise strengths - minimise weaknesses
- Create opportunities - avoid threats

3. Identify workers and union issues

Check potential issues against the criteria for a successful campaign.

4. Determine the organisation's goals

What are your overall objectives – not just in this campaign?

5. Create the campaign theme

What is the main idea of your campaign and what slogan will best capture the imagination of your allies and targets?

6. Select targets and allies

Who has the power to grant you your objective? Your target.

Who can you trust to share your plans with? Your allies.

Who else can help you reach the target, even if they don't necessarily agree with you about everything? Your indirect targets.

7. Develop the campaign strategies

What kind of strategy will you attempt to adopt? Will it be a high profile mass protest? Will it be a 'behind the scenes' lobbying campaign? This will depend largely on who your target is.

8. Develop tactics that fit your strategies

Not every tactic fits every campaign. What will you need to do to deliver your strategy?

9. Create a campaign timeline

What will happen when? How will you try to increase the intensity of your campaign? Have you planned your campaign to take account of any events you know are taking place in the campaign period?

10. Evaluate your strategies

Check how things are going regularly.

11. Develop new tactics to fit the new strategies

Don't be afraid to make changes to your timeline to reflect how things are going so far.

Checklist for a good campaign issue

Have you selected the right issue? A good campaign issue should match as many as possible of these points.

1. Have a good chance of success

The problem must not be so large and insurmountable that there will be no successes to report at the end of the campaign.

2. Be widely felt

The issue must be relevant to the great majority of members and potential members and there must be widespread agreement about the solution proposed.

3. Be deeply felt

The issue must be something that people feel very strongly about.

4. Be an issue which can involve members and potential members

Members and potential members should feel that they and not outsiders have won the campaign.

5. Be worth the effort

Members should feel it is an issue that is worth their time and effort. If the issue is not so important but requires enormous time and commitment it might not be worth the effort.

6. Be easily understood

The issue can be expressed simply, so that it can convince members and potential



Dean Beevor

A colourful splash helped to protect the Local Government Pension Scheme.

members

7. Be consistent with your values, priorities and strategic plans

The issue must be consistent with UNISON's values and reflect your union's priorities and plans.

Examples of strategy

The circumstances surrounding each campaign are unique and each campaign strategy must be unique as well. But we can take guidance from some strategies that were part of other campaigns.

See examples on opposite page.

Strategy type	Description	Examples
Workplace activity strategy	Workers organise their members using their knowledge of the job and their access to first hand information.	Wearing stickers, work-to-contract, collective whistle-blowing, industrial action
Worker/union solidarity strategy	Workers and unions in different locations (who are not a direct part of a dispute) demonstrate their support.	Rallies, leafleting, marches, petitions.
Bargaining strategy	Use of bargaining to gain leverage in contract negotiations with direct or indirect target.	Enter into collective bargaining arrangements and if necessary lodge a collective claim or dispute.
Management strategy	The management of the target employer is placed on the defensive and experiences the same emotional discomforts that they put workers through.	Pressure on employer eg via elected councillors, service users.
Community/public strategy	Important elements of the community and opinion leaders support the campaign and threaten the employer's community support.	Coalitions with religious, women's, civil rights, parent, immigration, environment, pensioners, gay and lesbian, and human rights groups.
Capital strategy	The employer's behaviour is challenged through its ties with investors, lenders, and shareholders.	Communication to financial analysts, shareholders and lenders.
Customer/service user/ strategy	Appealing to the customers or clients of an employer.	Community outreach, leafleting service users, working with voluntary groups.
Political action strategy	The legislative, political and electoral process is used to pressure the target.	Lobbying politicians at appropriate levels, local councillors through to MEP's.
Industry/competitor strategy	Pressure on other employers in the same industry is used to place pressure on the target employer.	Industry white papers, industry regulatory efforts, other employers sign codes of conduct.
Private contractors strategy	Scrutinising ties with important private/ voluntary sector contractors where services have been outsourced.	Liaising with other branch members with the same private employer, accessing information from Bargaining Zone database (via UNISON website).
Government/ regulatory strategy	Assisting government agencies that enforce laws and regulate employers to scrutinise the target employer.	Contact the HSE or other regulatory body to investigate claims.



Marcus Rose

Members in Tower Hamlets campaigning against cuts.

Select targets and allies

A mistake made in many campaigns is that time, effort and money is put into developing resources and tactics before any discussion takes place about who has the power to deliver the campaign targets and who might help us reach them. It is worthwhile spending some time identifying the following in relation to your campaign:

Direct target

The group or individual who needs to act to enable you to meet your goal. For example: an anti-BNP campaign might have as its direct targets the voting public.

Indirect target

Other groups or individuals your campaign has to reach, because they are influential in enabling you to reach your direct target. To continue the same example, an indirect target

might be the press, and another might be other political parties or other unions. You may not agree with everything the indirect targets say, but they can help you get to your direct target, so you need a relationship with them.

Allies

These are your close friends. Indirect targets are often confused with allies. A good test of whether a group is an ally or not is – do you trust them enough to share your campaign plans with them?

Action plan – resources, targets and allies

	What do you want from them?	What arguments will you use? (Your first ideas – you can add to this later)	How will you get access to them?
Direct target(s) The groups or individuals who need to act to enable you to meet your goal.			
At workplace level			
At branch level			
Outside the union			
Indirect target(s) The groups or individuals who will help you get to your direct targets – eg the media			
Allies The groups or individuals you trust with your plans			
Sources of help and information			

Running your campaign

Remember that the branch can play a key role in organising and co-ordinating workplace campaigns. It can provide information and resources and can help smaller workplace groups to come together to pool ideas and resources and campaign together.



Campaigning to stop the closure of residential care homes in Neath Port Talbot.

Your campaign activities will depend on the resources available in your branch and the strength of your organisation. You don't have to be over-ambitious. Small-scale activities which go well will be more effective than big plans that don't work out. If you are a very small branch, a poster campaign may be all you can aim for but, done imaginatively with eye-catching posters, it could generate a lot of interest and support.

Remember, the political parties spend millions of pounds on poster campaigns in the run-up to a general election, so they clearly believe that this is an effective way to get their message across.

If you are campaigning in the workplace you will need the support of your members and will want to attract the support of non-members.

So an important part of your campaign will be about raising colleagues' awareness and keeping them involved and informed.

Remember that the aim of the campaign is to get something changed and improved. At the end of the campaign you want someone to have taken action.

Recruiting new members

Campaigning gives you a chance to recruit new UNISON members. Your campaigning activities will make you visible in the workplace.

Carry recruitment leaflets around with you and ask non-members about any problems they may have. You should also make sure that recruitment leaflets (and membership application forms) are available at any stand, stall or exhibition you organise as part of your campaigning.

Campaign materials

An effective way to start to raise awareness of an issue and get people interested is to distribute materials carrying your campaign message. These can range from simple stickers and posters to leaflets which explain the issues in more detail or special newsletters with information about the issues and details of other campaign activities.

If your campaign is based on a national campaign being run by UNISON, you will have the advantage of ready-made campaign materials produced by the union which you can order in bulk from the communications unit. The same will probably apply if you are participating in some other national campaign, such as those run by the TUC.

If your campaign is about more local issues you may have to produce your own materials or use a mixture of your specific materials and general literature available from the union.

You should be aware that not everyone reads leaflets that are just handed to them and



Amanda Kendal

that even if they do they can soon forget the contents. So you should aim to link the campaign literature to a particular event or follow it up with some other activities to keep people's interest.

If your resources do not extend to large events, you should at least make sure that your literature tells people what action they can take to support your campaign.

A survey of UNISON branches showed that posters were the most frequently used campaign tools. It is important to remember however, that in order to be really effective the posters should be attractive and changed regularly, not left on noticeboards to become faded, tattered and ignored.

Campaigning in the community

Raising public awareness

Raising public awareness of an issue will help you get wider support for your campaign and so help you to achieve your campaign

objectives. It will also raise UNISON's profile in the community. This will in turn strengthen your own members' support for the campaign and help attract new members.

The branch has an important part to play in local campaigns. Part of its function is to develop and maintain contacts in the community and links between workplace groups and other local branches.

The region should also be involved in campaigns which extend into the local area. If not, you can propose they do so, or ask them to support your activities in the community.

There are various ways in which you can raise public awareness and obtain further support. Many activities will be similar to those that you run in the workplace except that they have a wider audience. They could include:

- putting on an exhibition for example in the local library
- running a street stall

- having a stand at a local event such as a May Day rally or summer fair
- handing out leaflets or stickers
- getting people to sign a petition
- organising a public meeting with a keynote speaker
- participating in local seminars and other events, for example by providing speakers, by having an information stand or by sending delegates who will make a contribution from the floor
- providing speakers to local groups, schools and colleges
- holding some form of demonstration or visual stunt
- publicising your activities in the local media.

Hold a sponsored event or get your message printed on T-shirts, caps, badges, mugs or pens which you can sell to supporters – it can all help publicise your campaign as well as raise funds for further activities.

A public event can also provide an opportunity to involve other campaigning groups and local or national celebrities, as well as being a good story for the local media.

Working with other groups and organisations

You may be able to join forces with other community groups or organisations. It is a very good idea to maintain records of these groups, with information about the ways in which they can be useful. You can contact other trade unions in your area either through workplace contacts or through your local trades council. Your UNISON regional office will be able to give you the name of the trades council secretary.

You can also get your message across to the community through professional groups. There may be some in your area which organise meetings and events for their members and are on the lookout for outside speakers.

Surveys

A survey is a very good way to raise awareness and to obtain evidence to strengthen your case.

The survey does not need to be complicated – in fact the shorter and simpler the survey form is, the more likely people are to fill it in.

You could distribute the survey as a follow-up to a poster or leaflet campaign or a meeting, once people have had an opportunity to read about or listen to the issues. If you can distribute it in person you will also have the chance to talk briefly to people about the issues.

You should include an explanatory letter with the survey form, explaining the purpose of the survey, what you will do with the results, how to fill it in, where to return it and thanking people for taking time to complete it.

You will also need to decide whether you want people to provide their names or whether the forms will be anonymous. In many circumstances people will be reluctant to give their names in case the information they give can be used against them. If people are not required to give their names, say so, and emphasise that the information will be kept completely confidential. It is the overall results that you will use to build a case to present to management.

Make sure that you keep people informed of what you are doing and of your progress with management. If you don't, they are unlikely to want to cooperate with any future surveys.

Meetings and videos

Another way to raise awareness is to hold a special meeting. The meetings might be branch or open meetings to which non-members are also invited.

The speaker could be someone from within the union, including someone from another branch or someone from an outside organisation.

You could also show a video, as an event in itself or as part of the special meeting.

Seminars and workshops

If you are very well organised you could run a more formal seminar with platform speakers and workshop sessions at which participants can discuss specific aspects of the issue in smaller, informal groups.

You should also make sure that you arrange for someone to lead each of the workshops. They don't have to be outside experts but they should have some knowledge of the subject and be able to keep the workshop to its task and ensure that everyone has an equal chance to join in the discussion. Some UNISON

activists have been trained as lay tutors who may be able to help. Your regional educational officer can help you contact them.

Exhibitions

An exhibition is a good way to attract people's attention and raise awareness.

If you have access to a set of plain display boards you may be able to design and mount your own exhibition, using UNISON posters and other materials. Don't be tempted to put too much on the boards. Try to keep to a single theme. A simple, bold display is more eye-catching than a lot of leaflets that people can't read quickly. You should save those for the stall.

A Million Voices stall in a West Midlands hospital.



Attracting media publicity

If you want the public to learn about your campaign, the facts behind it and the events taking place, you will need to publicise these through the media. For most branch campaigns you will use the local rather than the national media. This means regional newspapers, local newspapers and free newspapers, local radio (BBC and independent) and local TV (BBC and independent). Local newspapers are the most likely to cover your story, local radio next and local TV the least likely.

It is important to remember that journalists are basically just ordinary people trying to do a job. They are usually working within constraints and structures over which they have little or no control. This means that they cannot guarantee that a particular story will appear or that it will appear unaltered, since that is the decision of the sub-editors or producers to whom the story is passed.

It is also important to remember that journalists work to deadlines, some of which are very tight, so you should find out the relevant deadlines and make sure that you submit stories in good time to meet them.

If you are going to be dealing with the media on a regular basis you should try and go on a media training course. This will help you acquire the necessary skills and confidence and also give you advice on not being caught out by journalists trying to put words into your mouth, for example.

Finding contacts

You will need to find out what local media there are in your area - you may be surprised how many there are. Your branch communications, publicity or other officers may already have a network of media contacts. If not, the local library is a good place to start. It will usually keep copies of the local newspapers. Don't ignore the free newspapers - they are often distributed very widely throughout the locality.

You should list the addresses and phone and fax numbers for the different papers and radio

and TV stations. It is always best to find out contact names for each one so that you can start to build up working relationships with some of the more helpful journalists. You could also see whether there is a representative from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) on the local trades council who could give you some advice about people to contact. Alternatively you might find a local NUJ member who is willing to help.

Your media strategy

If you are planning an extensive campaign, you could speak to one of your media contacts before the campaign starts to give them advance notice and to discuss the best way to get stories in. Remember that radio and TV will want more than a written press release and that plenty of notice has to be given if you want a camera crew to be present.

Your media strategy should be aimed at achieving maximum public attention and support for your campaign. You will need to consider:

- what you can achieve by media coverage
- who you will contact
- how you will contact them
- what message you want to get across
- what sort of events will attract a lot of publicity
- when to release the story
- how to follow it up
- who will deal with subsequent media interest
- what briefing they will need.

News releases

The most useful way that you can get your message across is by issuing a news release. Producing a news release that is going to attract an editor's attention requires care and effort (see section on presentation skills-page 29-for practical advice on producing a news release).

News releases can be used to:

- give notice of an event
- announce a new campaign
- provide progress reports on campaigns
- report on a meeting
- report on what action workers have decided to take
- give advance notice of a speech and its contents
- attach a copy of a letter you have written for example to your local MP
- provide background information.

The key advantage of using news releases is that they give you the chance to put across the story in your own words, although there is no guarantee that journalists or their editors will not change these words.

You should aim for as wide a readership as possible. Send your press release to the news editors or to your named contacts in all the relevant organisations. It is often helpful to follow this up with a phone call. You can send news releases to local radio and TV also but remember that they may require an interview or visual news too.

Don't forget to send a copy to UNISON regional office or headquarters and to *UNISONInfocus*. The union is always keen to know what branches are doing so that we can publicise your successes in union publications and pass on ideas to other members for their campaigns.

The media want stories about things that are happening, not just opinions, so your story must be newsworthy.

The local media are particularly keen to have stories with a local angle so you should always try to use local facts and figures or local people who are willing for their story to be used (make sure you have their written consent to use their story and if in doubt check with the regional office as well).

The media also need to have an event to hang a story on, so you could think about creating an event to make the news. An event that provides visual impact and opportunity for a good photograph is always useful.

Sometimes you may need to get a story in quickly in which case you will have to contact journalists by telephone. When telephoning you should:

- ask to speak to the person covering the news area you are dealing with such as health, employment issues
- make a note of the person to whom you are speaking for future reference
- give your name, organisation, name of campaign and concise details of the story
- keep a note of the conversation (time, date, who said what, arrangements for future contact etc).

Challenging bad reporting

Inaccuracies in reports occur for all kinds of reasons and are usually genuine mistakes rather than a conspiracy. However, if reporting is seriously biased or inaccurate this should be challenged straight away.

If the report was clearly one-sided you should write to the editor and ask for a right of reply. If the report was inaccurate you should phone the reporter or news editor and list all the mistakes and omissions calmly and firmly, or write to the editor listing all the mistakes and omissions.

Always be absolutely sure of your facts before you complain.

Generating debate

You can get direct access to local media and use this to generate a public debate about the issues that concern you. Your options are:

- newspapers – letters page, open column, website comments



Marcus Rose

- radio – phone-ins, audience reply programmes, texts and emails
- TV – audience participation, for example in current affairs programmes and access slots, website comment, texts and emails.

Branches will normally find it easiest to use newspapers, websites and radio phone-ins.

Writing to newspapers

You can take the opportunity to write letters and email them to the newspapers throughout the campaign. If your press release has not been used you could turn it into a letter and try to get your story in that way. You can use the letters page to respond to all kinds of stories.

Some newspapers have a special column which can be used by local organisations to explain what they do or discuss a particular issue. You could look through your local papers to see if they have this sort of opportunity and phone them up to find out how it works and whether you could contribute a column.

Radio phone-ins

Phone-in programmes are quite common on local radio and provide another useful means of getting your message across. Some will be general phone-ins, others will have a specific theme.

If it is a general phone-in, it is a good idea to respond to something that has been in the news, either locally or nationally, and to have a number of people ready to phone in with different points to make about the issue. Make

sure that you have got plenty of people ready to phone in if your campaign event is in the news.

If the phone-in is on a particular theme, you will need to check in advance. Listen out for trailers for forthcoming programmes. These programmes usually start with someone being interviewed on a particular topic and then they take calls from listeners. If you are phoning in to a programme that is on a specific topic, do stress any experience or special knowledge that you have that qualifies you to make an informed contribution.

You may be able to arrange for a UNISON regional official to be interviewed about your campaign, in which case you will want to have people ready to phone in with friendly questions. On the other hand, if the programme guest is from the employers' side you can get people to phone in with difficult questions.

And a final word of warning – turn the radio off or right down when you are phoning in. If there is a radio on in the same room it will cause a terrible howling and they may cut you off.

Responding to articles on newspaper websites

Most newspapers have websites and the facility to comment on a story that they publish there. Monitor the websites of your local media and where appropriate, be prepared to respond to a story by leaving a comment on the website. Then email other members and ask them to do the same.

Using new media and social networking sites

Not all your campaigning needs to be done face to face. We are increasingly using online campaigning to help us get our messages out and to get support for our campaigns.

There are several ways of doing this. If your branch has a website, you could create new pages dedicated to your current campaign. You must ensure they are kept up to date and use pictures and members to tell the story of the campaign. Think of your web page as a way of starting a conversation about the campaign.

In the old days of setting up a website or webpages, it was all crafted by hand with hours spent sweating over html manuals and every link individually coded. You can still do it that way if you want, but before rushing to build pages just because that's what everyone decided at the last campaign meeting, it's worth considering if this is the most effective method to get your campaign to a wider audience.

With so many other options - wordpress, blogs, facebook, myspace and twitter – what's the best thing for your branch, and do you need new webpages at all?

Why do you need to be online?

Put down on paper first the reasons why you need a website or social media account for your campaign, what you want to be able to do online and who it's going to be for.

Write down:

What you want to do with your web pages. Don't have them just for the sake of it. You may only need an online place where people can get your contact details, or you might want to use your website as a way of organising, or disseminating information about the campaign.

Have you got information that people can't find somewhere else? Most people will go to already established sources of information.

Who's your audience? You might want to communicate with activists, members, and non-members in different ways.

Organise your materials

What do you already have that you want to put online?

This could include:

- campaign news and events – remember if you start including this, it needs to be regularly updated
- what your campaign is about and why it is necessary
- branch contact details and hours
- branch newsletters. It can be a good idea to make your branch newsletter available by email subscription
- branch information – be clear about what can go online. This is a public space so don't put up anything you don't want your employer to have easy access to

Stuff from elsewhere:

- join us - link to the online joining form on the UNISON national site
- UNISON news – you can either add our RSS feed to your site, or add a twitter badge for unisontweets.

Try to keep it small and manageable. Someone has to spend time updating all this stuff, so stick to the things you really need to do online.

Wordpress

Before you start to build a campaign website or pages, it's worth considering publishing platforms like Wordpress.org. It's an online blog and web publishing tool that gives you a site structure and content management system all-in-one. It's easy to set up and you don't have to know a scrap of html. And you can make it look and work like a website.

The other handy thing about these publishing platforms is that it's very easy to add other

elements to your site like your facebook group, twitter, photo galleries, videos etc.

You can either use it as a blogging site online, or for a more advanced site, you can use wordpress.com and have a full website based on your web host.

Website

Before you can add webpages for your campaign, you first need to have a website. Branches should only consider setting up a website using html if they have someone who is able to create and maintain the site, using a package like Dreamweaver for example.

It is worth bearing in mind that if the person who keenly sets it up then moves on, you may be left with a redundant website. So don't become dependent on 'experts' to update and change.

You can create a website using Dreamweaver, or other web publishing package. You can then host it via your internet provider or other paid for web hosting service.

It should be supported by some kind of content management system, like Joomla for example, so that anyone in the branch can easily learn how to add or amend content on the site.

Once you have created your web pages you need to have them 'hosted' by a web host.

What's a web host?

Often whoever is providing your broadband service will offer web hosting so you can create your own website. Costs range from free for a basic website to monthly fees for a larger website, with large files. Check with your broadband provider to see what they provide.

You can get web hosting from a company that is not your internet provider. But most branch websites should be able to get what they need from their current provider.

Social media

Using social media is a way of interacting with your members and potential members in a place they already visit to get information. Social media offers a different and more interactive relationship with the audience than traditional web pages.

All social media is based on establishing a presence, engaging and growing your contacts. Unlike traditional websites, you cannot just put up static information and then go away and ignore it. It requires regular attention – just like growing a plant!

"Social media is on and active 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Twitter and Facebook operate in real-time. Members, non-members and supporters quickly stop checking a campaign site that hasn't been updated in a week."

Alex White

alexwhite.org/2009/08/why-unions-should-embrace-social-media

Setting up a facebook group is relatively easy, but you have to put in the time to update the information and moderate comments – so it is a commitment.

And again, remember social media networks are public spaces so don't put up anything you don't want your employer to have access to.

Useful links

UNISON's facebook group

3 Companies facebook group

UNISON's Million Voices facebook page
unisontweets – official UNISON twitter – twitter.com/unisontweets

unisonmv – twitter for Million Voices for Public Services – twitter.com/unisonmv

Writing for the web - a UNISON guide – unison.org.uk/websupport/writingforweb.asp

Presentation skills

This section sets out some basic advice on getting your presentation right. It covers

- writing a leaflet or newsletter
- writing a letter
- writing a news release
- dealing with journalists' enquiries
- preparing for an interview.

Writing a leaflet or newsletter

Although UNISON, the TUC and other organisations produce newsletters and leaflets to back up specific campaigns, which you will be able to obtain in bulk for your local campaigns, there will be occasions when you want to produce your own campaign materials to keep members informed of the campaign's progress. This is relatively straightforward to do and can be a very effective way of reaching people.

The branch or region will almost certainly have computer technology which you can use to produce your materials. Some of your members may have particular design, drawing or cartoon skills that they are only too pleased to put to good use to help you.

You can also use the UNISON communications online print service (due to be rolled out from July 2010). This gives you the opportunity to drop your own locally relevant text into professionally designed templates with the correct UNISON branding. This will ensure that your leaflet or newsletter looks professional. Further information from your print@unison.co.uk

If you are producing a leaflet or newsletter you will need to consider:

- who it is aimed at
- what message you want to put across
- how frequently you want to issue the newsletter
- the title, style and format you are going to use – you will want to stick to it for subsequent issues for consistency

- how many copies you will need – is it for members only or a wider readership?
- how you will get it printed
- how much it will cost.

Have a look at some examples of existing newsletters and leaflets and decide which you think are the most attractive and readable and why. Then experiment with some designs yourself. Remember the following points about good design:

- make it look inviting – people won't read it automatically
- make the layout clear and eye-catching
- choose a good column width – if it is A4, two columns look best
- use punchy headlines
- break the text up into small chunks
- don't make it too wordy – have plenty of space, illustrations, or sub-headings
- don't make it too cluttered – avoid using lots of different styles or typefaces at once.

The main text is what your audience will look at last, after the headlines and pictures, so write it after you have decided on the layout and fit it in. The rules about the text are very clear:

- use the 'five Ws' – who, what, where, when, why
- put the most important information at the beginning
- use short sentences
- write in a logical order
- use simple language but make it vigorous and active
- be positive
- avoid jargon, abbreviations and padding
- use quotes to add human interest
- check it for accuracy, spelling and grammar.

Remember that there's a limit to the amount of information people can take in at one time. So keep to a few key points, for example:

- what the problem is
- what should be done
- how people can help
- a call to action
- a contact email address and telephone number for more information.

Writing a letter

A well-written letter should:

- be correctly addressed and dated
- use the name, title and address of the person you are writing to
- be as short as possible
- be maximum one page long
- be easy to understand
- say why you are writing the letter
- say what you want to say in a logical order
- use a new paragraph for each new point
- be free from mistakes
- be typed not handwritten where possible.



Your letter should also state clearly who you are. Remember to identify yourself as a UNISON member and give your position in the union, for example branch health and safety officer. Say also which branch or workplace you represent. Remember to sign the letter. If possible get several people to sign it (making sure they are all clearly identified). This increases the impact of the letter.

If you are organising a letter-writing campaign you may be able to use a model or draft letter

provided as part of the materials of a wider campaign. Remember you may need to rewrite the model letter to make it more suitable for your own use, for example by adding in some local references.

You should also encourage people to rewrite the letter themselves, perhaps adding in some personal comments from their own experience. They should also follow the tips for good letter writing set out above.

Letters can be sent by post or email.

Writing a news release

As already explained, a news release is the most useful way to get your story to journalists. However, to stand any chance of it being used, it must be presented properly.

Content

The basic rule for any news release is that it must contain the five Ws: what, who, where, when and why. It should also get these in at the very beginning. So the first paragraph of your news release should state, preferably in the first sentence:

- what is happening
- who is doing it
- where it is happening
- when it is happening.

It should then say:

- why it is happening.

The following paragraphs of the news release should then go on to set out more details. The story should be presented in a logical order and should concentrate on the facts.

If you want to include an opinion this should preferably be in the form of a quote from a key figure in your campaign. If you can include a quote from a big name, so much the better.

Put the information in the order of its importance as editors cut from the bottom of the news release if they can't use it all.

Your news release should have a short and snappy headline, probably based on your first sentence. Try to make sure it involves people doing something, but don't try and compete with the popular tabloids. You're not looking for something witty or outrageous – just something that will capture the journalist's attention.

Style

The style in which you write the news release is very important. You should aim to use:

- short sentences – no more than 25 to 30 words
- vigorous, assertive language rather than a bland style
- positive rather than negative statements
- language that is free from jargon or abbreviations that are meaningless to anyone outside the trade union movement (and to many within it) – such as NEC, SOG
- plain words with no padding
- direct quotes rather than indirect ones so that your story comes alive.

Format

The best way to send your news release is in the body of an email as journalists are busy people so you need to make it as easy as possible for them to see it. You should pay careful attention to the format of your news release, which should be clear and neatly laid out. The most important things to remember are:

- make sure it says 'News Release' at the top
- put the date on it
- put the time and date of any embargo at the top in capitals
- give it a headline
- always include a contact name and telephone number
- add a note to editors if you want to give background information or details of a photo opportunity

Dealing with journalists' enquiries

If you are approached by a journalist for a story you need to deal with the situation carefully and confidently. You should:

- ask yourself whether you are the best person to comment – if there is someone better qualified than you, put the journalist in touch with them
- take your time – find out what the journalist wants to know and why, and what sort of item it is
- don't answer off the cuff or you will just waffle – say you will call the journalist back
- check all the facts and work out what you want to say – then ring the journalist back with a well thought-out response.
- always ring back if you have promised to do so – if you don't the journalist will either phone you again and probably be annoyed and less sympathetic, or worse, may never phone again
- don't make off-the-record statements.
- say what you want to say and no more – don't be caught off guard by rambling, apparently chatty interviews, and don't let the journalist put words in your mouth by using questions like, "wouldn't you agree that ...?"

School meals staff in Sheffield lobbying a council meeting about their pay.



- if in doubt, contact UNISON's press office at Mabledon Place, or ask your region for support and advice.

Preparing for an interview

A successful radio or TV interview depends as much on your preparation beforehand as your performance at the time. Most people can perform quite adequately but the ones who come out best are those who have prepared for the questions and know what message they want to get across.

If you are invited to take part in an interview you need to find out:

- what the programme is
- who is doing the interview
- what they want to talk about
- the programme's angle
- how long it will be
- whether it will be live or recorded
- whether it will be by telephone, in the main studio, from a remote studio or face-to-face on location
- whether there will be other contributors. If so, who?
- whether it will be edited
- whether the audience will be local or national.

You then need to consider:

- what you will get out of it
- what audience you want to reach
- whether it is worth doing
- whether you are the best person to do it.

Planning

Before you do the interview you should plan carefully. If you have the opportunity, listen to or watch the programme so that you get some idea of its usual style and format. Don't think you can do the interview off the cuff but don't write out or memorise a whole speech either.

Decide on the main points that you want to get across. Select between three and five points depending on the length of the interview and make sure you learn all the facts that support those points. Think about how best to make the points – you should aim to be lively, direct and relevant. Have some good examples ready to illustrate your points.

Try to anticipate the questions you will be asked and be prepared for hostile or leading questions. Think of the question you would least like to be asked and have an answer ready for it.

Before the interview

Make sure you arrive in plenty of time – allow at least 10 minutes to prepare and collect yourself. Wear something that you feel comfortable in.

Don't drink alcohol beforehand even if it is offered to you. If your throat feels dry because you are nervous take a few sips of water.

Try to relax – deep breathing helps. Check with the interviewer how they are going to introduce you and ask what the first question will be so that you are prepared and can get off to a good start. Check once again how long the interview will be so that you can plan to end well too.

During the interview

Don't let yourself be rushed, but avoid long pauses as well or you will sound evasive or unsure of your facts. Make a good start and try to get your main point in right at the beginning. This will be easier if you checked beforehand what the first question would be.

Keep your answers short and to the point. Speak clearly in everyday language and avoid jargon or technical terms that people will not understand. If the subject is a complex one, make sure that you explain it in a simple way. Try to sound assertive, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and lively.

Don't give yes or no answers. – follow up your reply with the points you want to get



Chris Taylor

The Protect our Pensions bus was a great backdrop for a TV interview.

over. Make sure that you work all your points into the interview. You don't have to answer an irrelevant question – just say something like: “I think the important issue here is ...” and say what you want to say. Challenge any inaccurate statements politely but firmly. And finally, keep your eye on the time and try to go out on a strong note.

Tips for radio interviews

You can get away with having some short notes or key words on a notepad or cards, but avoid papers that rustle and don't read from your notes or you will sound stilted.

If you are not in a studio (radio interviews are often done over the phone) make sure that the interview is in a quiet place away from extraneous noises and give instructions that you are not to be disturbed.

Tips for TV interviews

On the TV the way you look matters. Choose neat, sober clothes that won't distract viewers from what you have to say or undermine your credibility.

Sit still but not rigid, slightly forward in your chair and look the interviewer in the eye. Look alert and attentive and don't fidget. Try to keep hand movements to a minimum when you are making a point. Remember that the camera could be on you at any time, not just when you are speaking.

Don't keep referring to notes. You could have a pad with some key words on the table in front of you or on your lap but you should only look at them discreetly.

Tips for location

If you are being filmed on location, make sure your surroundings are suitable. Avoid noisy or busy locations which will be distracting to viewers or which will cause you to shout to be heard and therefore come across as aggressive. Choose a background that will illustrate the points that you are trying to get across, or else play safe and use a background that will give you authority such as in front of bookshelves or at a (tidy) desk.

Tips for remote studio interviews

If you are asked to do a remote studio interview you will have to listen to questions through an earphone and deliver your answers into a camera. You should treat the camera as if it were a person's face and look at it. React with your face to the interviewer's questions and when answering imagine that you are next to them in person. If you are taking part in a discussion use the same techniques that you would in a normal studio – cut in and speak to people when you want to. Then they can't ignore you just because you are not present with them.

Lobbying decision makers

Lobbying means putting your case directly to policy and decision makers in order to inform them and get them to do something. So you need to find out who is responsible for making the decisions, when a particular decision is going to be taken and where you find the people you want to lobby.

The usual people to lobby are councillors, MPs, and MEPs, and other professionals.

Remember that lobbying can be used to show support for something, as well as to fight against something. While we need to make our voice heard about proposals or decisions that we believe are wrong or harmful, we also need to use that voice to demonstrate our support for the things we value. Otherwise we risk losing them.

Lobbying your MP

The reason for lobbying your MP is in order to get them to take some action, so you need to understand exactly what MPs can do before you decide whether lobbying your MP is appropriate.

The sorts of things that MPs can do are:

- write to a minister and get a personal reply
- ask a written or an oral parliamentary question
- put down an Early Day Motion
- present a Private Member's bill
- present a Ten Minute Rule bill
- sponsor or speak in a parliamentary debate.

Most of these are just devices for drawing attention to an issue, but they can be useful if you want to get a subject aired in parliament and they may lead to something more tangible.

It is also helpful to find out as much as you can about your MP and their particular interests so you have some idea of the support you are likely to get and how to approach them.

Are they in government or opposition? Do they hold any senior or junior office? What committees are they on? Are they a member of any all-party group? You can find out this information from one or more of the published guides to MPs, for example Vacher's guide, which should be available in your local library.

You will have to decide the best way to lobby your MP – how to contact them, where to contact them and in what capacity. You will also have to decide whether it is best to lobby them as individual constituents or as a campaign group or both. You could:

- write to them at their constituency or the House of Commons.
- visit them at their constituency surgery (an appointment is advisable)
- visit them at the House of Commons (always make an appointment first)
- join a mass lobby being organised nationally
- Invite them to a meeting.

MPs do take notice of letters, especially individual letters from their constituents. And the more they get, the more likely they are to take notice. You can write to them at the House of Commons but a letter to them at their local office will reinforce the fact that you are a constituent. Your letter should ask the MP to do something specific so that they are obliged to reply.

If you go to meet the MP, make sure that you are all agreed on the line you are going to take and that you are clear what you are asking the MP to do. Have a simple written briefing for the MP together with any supporting evidence. Keep a record of what was said and write to the MP afterwards confirming what they agreed to do. Don't forget to follow them up if you don't hear anything within a reasonable time. You could issue a news release about your meeting but it is only courteous to let the MP know that you are going to do this or you may prejudice any support they may have promised you.

Lobbying at Westminster

You have the right to turn up to the House of Commons and request a meeting with your MP as one of his or her constituents in order to raise your concerns on a particular issue and request that they act in some way to represent your concerns. The MP may or may not agree with your point of view but it is important that they know the strong feelings of their constituents.

An MP should – and generally will – regard you as a constituent rather than as a member of UNISON or any other interest group.

An MP is meant to represent a constituent's interests – even if he or she does not entirely agree with them. But remember, each MP has up to 90,000 constituents to look after – of which you are just one.

If you meet your MP it is best therefore to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible. Try to prepare the three or four key points that you want to get over in support of your case and if relevant be clear about what you want the MP to do to take the issue forward.

Most MPs are at the House of Commons from Monday afternoon to end of Thursday, as many travel back to their constituencies for Friday meetings.

But remember – if you have not arranged a meeting in advance, the likelihood of your MP being available is slim, as they are likely to have a full diary of other commitments, committees and meetings.

Arranging a meeting

The best way to contact your MP about meeting them is to write to them at the House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA.

All MPs have arrangements for their mail to be redirected when they are away from Parliament – it is much better to write to them here than to any other address you may have for them.

Writing a letter is preferable to ringing as you can clearly explain the issue while giving your

MP a written record of the problem which they may find useful to refer to later.

Where to go

If you have managed to make an appointment with your MP, you may not need to queue in the lobby queue – speak to the police at St. Stephen's Entrance. Attend the meeting as arranged – if you do not know the location of your meeting place ask the police or staff who will guide you to where you need to go.

Remember you will have to go through airport-type security to gain access to parliament – so make sure you leave time to do this.

If your MP has agreed to meet you, but not given you any details of where and when, or if you have not already arranged a meeting with your MP, you will need to queue outside St Stephen's Entrance.

The police will only allow 100 people, including lobbyists and other visitors, into Central Lobby at any one time. Therefore you will have to wait your turn to be directed inside, pass through the security check and proceed to Central Lobby.

Using the Green Card system

Once in Central Lobby, go to the desk and ask for a green card. This should be filled in and returned as directed. It is important that on the card you make a clear statement as to your reason for visiting, for example: "to discuss the unfairness of"

In the lobby queue to meet MPs.



Chris Taylor

This is very important because, if you do not meet with your MP, the card will then be sent on to him or her. The MP should then respond directly to you in due course: clearly the more he or she knows about why you were in Central Lobby the better.

The desk staff will take the card and officials will be asked to look for your MP and let him or her know that you are asking to meet with them. Many MPs will be in committee meetings or involved in other work so may not be able to come to see you. Sometimes their office staff may come to see you but there is a strong chance that you may be unlucky.

Disabled access

Because of poor disabled access to Central Lobby, disabled lobbyists will be met by their MP in Westminster Hall. Please notify UNISON if you have any special ambulatory needs or require any assistance.

Making the most of your meeting

As previously stated it is best to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible. In particular have in mind what you actually wish the MP to do. You should try to ensure you:

- thank him or her for taking the time to see you
- establish how much time they have
- seek to make a maximum of three points briefly but remember to allow most time for questions and discussion
- most importantly, ask them what they are prepared to do, for example, speak or write to their local authority/health trust, speak or write to the relevant minister, table written or oral parliamentary questions, sign relevant Early Day Motions or seek an adjournment debate.

Lobbying your MEP

It may be useful to lobby your MEP in some circumstances. MEPs are less likely to hold a local surgery because their constituency is too large. However, they will have a local office and you could make an appointment to meet them

there. To find out who your MEP is and where to write to them, contact your local council.

All MEPs are members of a committee. They sit on parliamentary committees, where they scrutinise and modify new European laws before they are passed. MEPs also draft reports on pieces of legislation and other policy documents that are presented to parliament.

An MEP from your region can represent your views when new laws are proposed and decisions are taken at European level. This gives ordinary people an opportunity to influence, through their representatives, most European laws and decisions.

You can ask an MEP to:

- vote in a certain way on legislation
- represent your opinion in committee discussions on new laws
- put you in touch with other MEPs interested in your campaign's issue.

Each constituency is represented by a number of MEPs (between three and 11 depending on the population of the area). At present there are 78 MEPs in the UK.

Contacting your MEP

The best way to get in touch with your representative is by writing. It will give them time to brief themselves on the issue you've raised.

Let's take an example of the sort of issue worth contacting your MEP about: Europe is looking to introduce a new type of cigarette, Reduced Ignition Propensity (RIP), which is less likely to cause fires. If you wanted to support this, you could put the following points in your letter.

The Department of Communities and Local Government has estimated that:

- every three days someone dies because of a cigarette fire
- nearly half of all households include a smoker

- these households are nearly one-and-a-half times more likely to have a fire than non-smoking homes
- there are an average of 132 deaths, 1,600 injuries and 4,300 fires per year in accidental home fires caused by smoking materials
- a packet of 20 cigarettes costs £4.48 (National Statistics Retail Prices) whereas the average damage caused by a house fire costs £25,300 (The Economic Cost of Fire).

Why would this campaign interest your MEP?

Although the campaign for the introduction of RIP cigarettes is a European issue, the consequences of these fires affect people locally. Every year people are killed and injured in fires started by cigarettes. The introduction of RIP cigarettes would help minimise the risk of smoking-related fires and this benefit would be felt in every constituency. This is why your MEP should be interested in this campaign.

Writing a letter

Make sure your address is on the letter to show which constituency you are from. Begin your letter by saying who you are and what your concerns are. Explain why you are writing and give examples and facts. Try and connect your request to the representative's interests.

For example, if they are sitting on a committee which addresses your issue, explain how your request relates to their committee responsibilities. The committee that deals with RIP legislation is the consumer protection committee.

Try to limit yourself to one, or at most two, sides of A4 paper.

Always ask for a response.

Sending an email

Go to the RIP campaign website action page. Here you can find the name of the MEP for

your constituency and how to send them an email.

Always ask for a response.

Getting publicity

Elected representatives often welcome press coverage of their support for a campaign. Engage your local press in the RIP campaign and the benefits of legislation to introduce these cigarettes. This is a campaign that will benefit local people in your area and will be a good way for the MEP to be seen in their local community. Your local fire station might be running their own campaign on these 'fire-safer' cigarettes - try and get as many prominent figures in your local area involved.

Lobbying professionals

There are various groups of professionals that you might wish to approach as part of a campaign. Lobbying a local organisation can be less confrontational than lobbying individuals and more productive than lobbying their national body. The first step is to identify your targets and then to decide what message you want to get across to them. You should try to:

- gain their understanding of, and sympathy for, the issues
- propose action that they can take as part of their daily professional lives.
- work with, rather than against, them.

After the campaign

Once your campaign is over it is important that you don't just stop – you need to communicate what you did and what you achieved so that people can see campaigning and the union really do make a difference.

Checklist

1. Tell members what you did and promote your successes – people need to see what the union can achieve.
2. Promote the outcome of your campaign in branch newsletters and on your web pages.
3. Tell the wider union about it because it's good to share and you may inspire another branch to organise a campaign. Let your area or regional organiser know and tell UNISON Infocus magazine (email infocus@unison.co.uk).
4. Thank people for taking part in or supporting your campaign.
5. Start thinking about the next campaign.



Paul Box

Celebrating success in Barnstaple where union members campaigned for better pay and conditions for members employed by Sodexo.



a million
voices
for
public
services

add
your
voice

UNISON campaigning
for a fairer society

unison.org.uk/million



Binmen in Barnsley adding their voices to our Million Voices campaign.

UNISON is Britain's largest public service trade union and represents more than a million voices delivering essential services to the public. Services that protect, enrich and change lives. But our members don't just work in public services - they and their families rely on them too.

We believe that cutting back public service spending and putting our services in the hands of private companies through more privatisation puts all our communities at risk.

UNISON is speaking up for public services and for the people who provide them. That's why we are campaigning at a national, regional and local community level to make the case for properly-funded, publicly-provided local services.

Find out more at:
unison.org.uk/million

To join UNISON online today, go to:
unison.org.uk/join


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the public service union