

# Organising for Health and Safety

A UNISON guide





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## Foreword



Welcome to this new guide on how we can use health and safety as a vehicle to recruit to the UNISON family and for organising existing members.

Our aim must be to turn UNISON into a genuinely organising union. There are few more important areas that can act as a vehicle for this than health and safety at work – particularly during the massive attacks by this Conservative led Government on our public services. Our members and potential members, already hard stretched, with limited resources and time to do their jobs are being expected to do even more with even less. This will place more demands on workers and trying to do the best that they can, as they always do for people who rely on them, health and safety considerations loom larger and larger.

In the past we have seen that during times of budget restrictions some employers try to cut corners on health and safety. There is no reason to presume that this time will be any different. As always it is our union that stands between the excesses of the employer and our members. Achieving this means having an organised workplace where as many people as possible are members. Organising around health and safety issues cuts right to the core of what's important for our members.

Becoming an organising union means that as many people as possible take part in organising activities that helps to stand up for our members during these increasingly difficult times and continues the growth of our union. I hope that this guide helps you to contribute towards these goals.

## 1. Introduction

The most important tools that UNISON has to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our members are our safety representatives, safety officers and safety committees. This guide suggests ways in which branches can review their effectiveness on health and safety; use health and safety to recruit new members and new safety representatives and will also help to develop the skills of existing activists. Proposals for developing safety representatives and safety committees should be part of the branch development and organisation plan.

Health and safety has been identified in many surveys as the single most important issue for our members, and potential members. If we are seen to be active and effective in health and safety, this will be an important aid to the recruitment and retention of members, as well as contributing to one of the main aims of our union —making sure our members are safe and healthy at work.

This guide has been produced so that branches can use either all or part of it, to look at how you can develop safety representatives, health and safety organisation, and safety committees. However, it works best as a complete package. The materials can be customised to make sure that they meet your own branch needs, or can be used in conjunction with the exercises in the Branch Development and Organisation Toolkit (available online at <http://www.unison.org.uk/activists/branchdevelop.asp>). In particular you should consider adding a session on recruitment or membership involvement.

The guide uses general organising techniques such as one-to-ones, workplace profiles, and techniques to help in overcoming objections. A health and safety scenario is not applied to each of these techniques but instead this guide highlights how health and safety can be used to win a campaign.

Please also see UNISON's general organising guidance for detailed information on these types of techniques. This information can be found on the

UNISON website here: [www.unison.org.uk/active](http://www.unison.org.uk/active). The page contains links to detailed information for activists, instructions on how to get involved, dates of upcoming conferences, information on voting and UNISON roles, and more.

### 1.1 Organising around health and safety

#### *Why health and safety and organising?*

Health and safety is a prime activity for UNISON and workplace health and safety is no different from other issues that UNISON fights for, like better wages or equality of treatment. Workers should have a work environment that will not rob them of their health, their limbs or their lives. In an organising campaign you must decide on an issue you can mobilise the workers around, and whether it's an issue that will give you leverage with the employer.

UNISON's help in resolving health and safety issues has concrete results both in terms of improving working conditions, raising awareness, recruiting and retaining members.

Organising is tough – as a UNISON representative you need to take advantage of any issues that arise during a campaign, including health and safety ones.

#### *Hazards of work*

Workers should know that health, safety and welfare concerns can be either traditional work hazards (chemical exposure, manual handling, work at heights, unsafe equipment), work design hazards (work pace, shift work, stress) or welfare hazards (access to toilets, adequate lighting or temperature). These can all have serious effects on health and safety and should not be accepted as 'just part of the job.' Something can be done about them.

As a health and safety activist you will often find situations where members and non-members:

- may think these problems are just part of the job

- are used to the jobs, even when the jobs are uncomfortable and even painful
- are not aware of the harmful effects of particular workplace hazards
- think they have no control over health and safety
- think it is not possible to change the work environment to get rid of the health and safety hazards.

Management may take the approach that the problem is due to workers' carelessness or that it is easier to 'fix the worker not the job.' What can be doubly difficult in an organising campaign is when workers take this attitude too.

In response, the branch will need to educate workers. This should take the following forms:

- highlighting the difference between UNISON's approach to health and safety and the employer's approach
- revealing management's failings on health and safety
- organising workers using an approach that supports the identification, elimination or reduction of hazards.

Many of the organising strategies and techniques used – for example, strategic planning, mapping, one-to-ones and setting up organising committees – can also be used to develop and motivate activists around health and safety issues.

Organising around health and safety is effective because:

- Most health and safety campaigns have real outcomes. If the problem is solved, working conditions are improved and it reflects well on UNISON activists. If management refuses to solve the problem, this can make the employer

look very bad, particularly if our campaign exposes this failure to act.

- Health and safety problems are shared by everyone in the workplace.
- The issues are easy to understand and experienced first-hand on a daily basis.
- Combating issues will give members a sense of their own power. Collective action will bring workers together.
- It sends a clear message to the employer.
- Health and safety is an issue that often wins community support. Injuries at work affect families, friends and even the wider community.

Therefore, a good organising issue should meet the following criteria:

- it can be won
- the problem is serious and solving it will result in a real improvement
- many workers are affected and feel strongly about the issue
- workers understand the issue and what actions the employer should take
- workers will gain a sense of their own power.

## 1.2 Organising for health and safety in workplaces that recognise UNISON

### Step one: Visibility

The clearest benefit of a unionised workplace is the presence of a UNISON safety rep. The rep needs to be trained, receive ongoing support from UNISON and make their presence visible to their members. Emails, newsletters and notice boards are all great places to publicise health and safety achievements.

Workers often assume that a solved problem means management seamlessly took care of it. If the health and safety rep contributed, they should take credit. This will demonstrate that UNISON is active on health and safety and may help to recruit new members.

### **Step two: Mapping**

Use a mapping exercise to see the density of members and non-members in your employers' different locations, as well as the number and locations of safety reps. See the description in section 1.6 as well as the full activity plan in Session Two.

### **Step three: Identify the key issues**

With the help of an organising team, one-to-ones and surveys will identify the key health and safety issues at that workplace. This exercise will serve both as an audit of the current situation as well as highlight areas that need further or altered representation. Addressing these issues will become a primary recruitment tool.

The organising team may include the branch health and safety officer, other experienced safety reps and other stewards with an interest in health and safety. It may also be useful to consult the union learning rep, the branch secretary and the welfare rep.

Remember however that the aim is to get workers organised and active, rather than 'leave it to the union.'

## **1.3 Organising for health and safety in non-unionised areas of the workplace**

### **Step one: Making contact**

You will need to know the specific nature of hazards facing people working in the area/department. Workers know the most about their own working conditions so the best thing to do is ask and listen. While doing this you should also begin to identify key

individuals who can be your primary contacts as well as the basis of an organising committee.

These contacts will be your largest asset. Give them your time and ensure they are supported, which should include regular one-to-one contact with you as the UNISON link.

### **Step two: Mapping**

Mapping exercises will let you see the branch's strengths and weaknesses in terms of health and safety. You'll create a physical map of your contacts in all of the employer's locations, and then identify the hazards specific to each location. Session Two details a mapping exercise that is primarily aimed at unionised workplaces but can be adapted for non-unionised areas as well.

Asking the following questions will help you to find the issues you can use to apply some pressure to your employer:

- Has the organisation been the subject of enforcement action by the Health and Safety Executive or other relevant enforcement body?
- Are there stakeholders or investors in the organisation that trade upon their own good health and safety record or environmental responsibility, and does the organisation's record meet those standards?
- Are there discrepancies that can be exploited? Do stakeholders/investors wish to be associated with an organisation that does not meet its own standards? What do you know about hazards in the sector, and does the organisation meet the statutory or sector standards to control those hazards?
- Do you have the appropriate information about the nature of hazards that workers in that work area face and access to expertise on what

should be done to control or eliminate them?

- Are there safety reps from other unions? Is there a safety committee and are there union members on the committee?

Remember that even if UNISON isn't yet recognised, the employer is legally required under the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations to establish a means of informing and consulting with their employees on health and safety issues.

### **Step Three: Improve member density**

The aim is to change the safety committee established by the employer, and possibly controlled by the employer, into a committee on which UNISON members and activists can lead the discussions and influence workplace policy. This may be a key element in building UNISON's presence in the workplace prior to negotiations for recognition.

If the employer has not introduced a consultation process, you will have to work with the organising team to educate workers on why it is important that their employer complies with legal regulations. This is all with the view to get UNISON members and reps into key positions so that potential members can see the benefits of membership. It is also about getting members active to improve member density and therefore our effectiveness as a union.

Worker health and safety committees should be established to help the campaign with health and safety issues in an effective way. These are formed of activists and can be tied into other organising activities that the branch has arranged.

If UNISON is not recognised, the employer is under no obligation to provide you with the same amount of information. However, they are still obliged to give such information to employees and those who come into contact with their operations, so it is very important to identify contacts inside the workplace.

## **1.4 The role of safety reps**

The legal rights of UNISON health and safety reps are laid out in the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (SRSC Regs). These apply only to workplaces where the employer has recognised the union. The SRSC Regs are available from the UNISON website here: [www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/17872.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/17872.pdf), or by placing an order with the communications unit (contact details on page 10), quoting stock number 1819.

The key functions of a safety rep are:

- representing workers in consultations with employers
- investigating potential hazards and dangerous occurrences
- examining the causes of accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases
- investigating complaints by members
- making representations to the employer
- carrying out workplace inspections
- representing employees in consultations with inspectors
- receiving information from inspectors and the employer
- attending joint health and safety committee meetings.

Employers must also

- establish a joint safety committee if requested by two or more health and safety reps
- make available to safety reps all information necessary to fulfil their functions

- provide help and facilities reasonably required by safety reps to carry out their functions
- provide time off with pay to carry out their duties and undergo union-approved training.

These are minimum rights. Many safety reps negotiate rights to facilities, information and time off that go well beyond the legal minimum.

Through the Employment Rights Act 1996 safety reps are given protection against unfair treatment, such as when raising health and safety concerns or carrying out designated functions of the role. All workers are given 'whistleblower' protection in The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

A watered down version of the safety reps' regulations – the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (HSCE Regs) apply in unrecognised workplaces.

Further information on both sets of regulations can be found here <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/17872.pdf>

## 1.5 Organising functions of a health and safety committee

The health and safety committee should be involved in several main activities:

- identifying current and potential health and safety hazards and problems
- identifying appropriate measures to eliminate or control hazards and problems
- identifying effective union strategies for raising health and safety issues as part of the overall organising campaign
- assisting the organising committee in integrating health and safety issues into the overall organising strategy

- serving as the focal point for worker concerns about safety and health and building member involvement in the union's health and safety efforts.

In addition to the activities in the second half of this booklet, activities that health and safety committees might also undertake include:

- surveying workers regarding their health and safety concerns, including current or past work-related symptoms, accidents, injuries and illnesses.
- body mapping, hazards mapping and other activities for identifying and tracking hazards and their impacts on the workers
- investigations of incidents, illnesses and near misses
- regularly reviewing information on hazards, monitoring data, incident reports etc.
- reviewing information on planned changes to the workplace, such as new equipment, new systems of work or new work areas
- engaging in regular communication with workers on health and safety issues
- educating workers about particular health and safety issues and concerns
- selecting priority health and safety issues to raise during the organising campaign
- assisting with the development of strategies for getting priority health and safety issues addressed
- monitoring HSE complaints similar to your area(s) of work.

## 1.6 Activities for organisers around health and safety

Further suggestions to include health and safety organising into a campaign strategy include:

- conduct an employee survey to identify hazards and key issues
- research past HSE or local authority inspections and evaluations at your workplace
- establish a health and safety committee among the workers
- train workers to identify hazards in the workplace
- educate workers on their health and safety legal rights
- analyse workplace injuries and illnesses by requesting copies of accident report forms. Safety representatives are entitled to see copies of these.
- find out which substances workers use and how much they're exposed to. Request the list of hazardous substances safety data sheets, and worker exposure measurements.
- ask individuals and groups to take proactive steps such as filing complaints on hazards, publicising workplace hazards, making sure that all accidents are recorded in the accident book.
- publicise awareness dates. For example, Worker's Memorial Day is April 28<sup>th</sup> every year and observed internationally with events, demonstrations, vigils and many other activities. You can find details of other health and safety campaigning dates in the UNISON diary.
- analyse sickness absence patterns to identify any which are work related and might indicate a health and safety concern that needs to be tackled.

### 1.6.1 Body mapping

"This is the first time I've known I'm not alone in my pain," a school technician said after seeing the body maps he and others had made. His reaction illustrates a classic barrier to health and safety organising – individual workers think their symptoms are just their problem.

The most common type of body mapping is to use the front and back outlines of a person. Make a large version for the overall group you are working with and smaller sheets for groups of workers. There are versions on the National Hazards Campaign website that you can download here: <http://www.hazards.org/tools>.

Next, decide what your questions are. Are you looking for aches and pains? All the symptoms workers have now or those suffered in the past? Long-term effects, such as chronic pain, hearing loss or stress? Do you want to see the effects by gender, age, job, department or seniority?

Get people into small groups. If you want information by age, for example, divide them into groups based on that category. Give each group coloured markers or coloured sticky dots and a code to mark their outlines. One method uses red = aches and pains, green = where does your stress show up, and blue = other symptoms that may be work-related. To get the overall picture, have them transfer their information to the large body map.

When you're looking at aches and pains, one person can act out her job. The others identify which body parts are likely affected by force, repetition, and awkward postures. With permission, they can mark the spots directly on the person, using "ouch" stickers. Participation is the key element here. Through participation workers identify the problems and find solutions for themselves and thus become activists.

### 1.6.2 Work-life balance maps

Work can leave lingering effects on a person even after they go home for the day. Work-life balance mapping or ‘world’ mapping is one way to show these effects.

Put a large sheet of paper up on a wall, with a small human figure in the centre. Then draw or add words around the figure to show how lives are affected by work. Someone might draw guitars if they can no longer play because of crippled tendons or broken hearts from a divorce linked to long hours, bullying or stress.

### 1.6.3 Workplace organisation mapping

After symptoms are identified on body and work-life balance maps, use workplace maps to show the contributing hazards. If there’s time before making the maps, get workers doing similar jobs to fill out a questionnaire and discuss it together.

Focus on:

- How is the work organised? (number of workers, shifts, hours worked, breaks)
- What is the work process? (How is work done? What tasks are involved? What equipment and tools are used?)
- What are the hazards?
- Are there any complaints or symptoms that show up in conversations?
- What measures are being taken to prevent or reduce the hazards?
- What else could or should be done?

Workers then draw the layout of their workplace or work area. Be sure to include doors, windows, offices, washrooms, desks, machinery, and equipment. The larger the map, the more details you can add. Try to get the questionnaire information

onto the map without making it too cluttered.

Hazards can be divided into six categories:

- physical (injuries from trips, falls and other accidents)
- environmental (energy sources such as temperature, noise and radiation )
- chemical (dusts, liquids, gases)
- biological or contagious (infection, needle-sticks, mould)
- ergonomic (force, repetition, posture, design of control panels)
- work organisation/psychosocial risks (stressors like long or odd work schedules, workload or feeling you have no say about the job).

Colours, shapes and sizes can be used to denote different hazards and their severity and exposure. Also useful can be tracing out workers’ paths/ movements in the workplace with string or a pen.

### Case study

One worker made two maps to show her paths in a care home, on normal days and then when working short-staffed. The clear differences between the maps led to an “ah-hah” moment about her increased workload, a serious stressor.

### 1.6.4 Using the maps

Look for patterns and things that don’t fit the patterns. Put together maps of separate work areas to get the overall picture of a workplace.

Over time, come back to them to record new information or check on changes. Develop ways to represent separate categories of information, to represent the experiences of different groups, or to represent changes over time.

Unions across the country and around the world use mapping techniques as an organising tool. It's a participatory method through which workers share their personal stories to create a powerful visual representation. Mapping techniques are effective because they:

- involve workers
- use visual images and do not rely on the ability to read or write
- get people thinking about their workplaces in a new way
- show that workers are not alone, that the problems are collective problems
- help point to collective solutions.

## 1.7 Training

Developing and supporting activists is a crucial role for all UNISON branches. With all the other pressures on UNISON stewards and safety reps, it is easy for them to become inactive or to attend a training course and then never find the time or the opportunity to put their actions into practice. But in the current climate our activists are more important than ever, so UNISON has developed straightforward resources and training to encourage reps to get active and to help branches work effectively with reps.

See your UNISON learning rep, branch education officer or ask your steward about getting involved in training for health and safety. Ask about mentoring and buddy schemes which may be available to new members who want to get involved.

## 1.8 Further information

*UNISON's website:* [unison.org.uk/safety](http://unison.org.uk/safety)

To order items from UNISON's communications unit

*you can go online to:*

[unison.org.uk/resources/onlinecatalogue.asp](http://unison.org.uk/resources/onlinecatalogue.asp)

*email:* [stockorders@unison.co.uk](mailto:stockorders@unison.co.uk)

*call:* 0845 355 0845 and ask to speak to Communications stock orders

You'll need to state:

- the document title and stock no
- the amount required
- your name
- your branch name and number
- telephone number
- and full postal address

The TUC provides information both on organising and health and safety, on the following websites respectively:

[tuc.org.uk/organisation/index.cfm](http://tuc.org.uk/organisation/index.cfm)

[tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s/index.cfm](http://tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm)

*Risks* is the TUC's free weekly e-bulletin on health and safety. To register go to:  
[tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s/tuc-14092-f0.cfm](http://tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-14092-f0.cfm)

*Hazards at Work – Organising for Safe and Healthy Workplaces* is a TUC publication and available from [www.tuc.org.uk/publications](http://www.tuc.org.uk/publications)

[www.unionprofessionals.org.uk](http://www.unionprofessionals.org.uk) gives organisers access to *Researching Companies*, the TUC manual on strategic corporate research

*Hazards* magazine can be accessed at [hazards.org/diyresearch/index.htm](http://hazards.org/diyresearch/index.htm)

## 2. Before you start

To do these exercises properly, you will need access to some information in advance. Your branch should have some of it; in other cases your employer will be able to provide it. This includes:

- the total number of employees in your workplace or group of workplaces – also the details of any employees working for contractors
- the number of UNISON members and potential members
- details of how many injuries and accidents have occurred in the past year in each work area
- details of what other unions have members and safety reps in your workplace.

### 2.1 How to use this booklet

In the following sections you will find a number of exercises to develop the level of organisation within your workplace, as well as improve how health and safety issues are dealt with.

The exercises are not intended as training. They are tools to develop practical proposals for improving health and safety organisation in the workplace.

Although you can go through these exercises on your own, they are designed for a group of safety reps or activists. You will get the most out of these exercises if your branch brings a number of people together from the same work area or similar work areas. Although most exercises will be suitable for all types of workplaces, some may need to be adapted for smaller or unique workplaces. Where a branch has recognition in several small workplaces, then the safety reps or potential safety reps can be brought together.

If you do these exercises as a group then you will need a facilitator, such as the branch health and safety officer, education officer or your full-time

UNISON regional officer. In each section there is a facilitator's brief.

To go through all the exercises will take a full day. We recommend undertaking all the exercises in order.

## 3. SESSION ONE: How organised are you?

### 3.1 Facilitator's notes

**Aim:** to identify how well you are organised in a particular work area or with an employer.

This session should last around 45 minutes.

*For this session you will need sufficient photocopies of handouts 1a and 1b, flipchart paper, marker pens and Blu-tack.*

Give out handouts 1a and 1b. Ask everyone to complete the questionnaire in handout 1b – then, if there are more than three people divide them into small groups and ask them to discuss how they can turn every 'no' into a 'yes'.

Get each of the groups to report back to the full group and then draw up a plan that can be put to your branch or safety committee to get this done. This should include practical proposals to address any points on the checklist that are not currently being covered.

## 3.2 SESSION ONE: Handout 1a

### How organised are you?

#### **Step 1**

Complete the checklist in handout 1b. From your own experience answer each of the 15 questions as they apply to your workplace.

Work in a small group and discuss your answers. In some cases people may have a different view. Look at those questions where there are mainly “no’s” and consider how these can be turned into “yes’s”.

Report back to the larger group.

#### **Step 2**

In the larger group write all the suggestions on a flipchart.

You will need these notes for Session Three.

## 3.3 SESSION ONE: Handout 1b

### Checklist for your workplace:

- Have all safety reps had training opportunities made available to them?
- Are employers notified in writing of all safety rep appointments?
- Does every safety rep have a clear constituency?
- As safety reps do you feel you have been provided with the support you need to carry out your role?
- Does your branch have a health and safety officer?
- Are you allowed sufficient time off to carry out your duties?
- Does your branch regularly talk to safety reps to find out if there are problems?
- Does your branch get regular reports on health and safety issues?
- Are health and safety issues considered when bargaining issues such as re-organisations are discussed?
- Are all workplaces/shifts covered by a safety rep?
- Do all safety reps have adequate time off for training and to carry out their duties?
- Do all safety reps have adequate facilities to carry out their work? (ie access to photo-copying, notice boards, the Internet etc)
- Are there effective arrangements for regular inspections and reporting hazards?
- Do members know how to contact their safety representative?

## 4. SESSION TWO: Mapping the workplace

### 4.1 Facilitator's notes

**Aim:** To build a picture of where members and safety reps are.

This session will last around one hour and 30 minutes.

*For this session you will need sufficient copies of the handouts 2a and 2b, flipchart paper, coloured flipchart pens (at least four colours in each set) and Blu-tack.*

This session will ask the participants to map their workplace by membership density, safety reps and other unions. It will also try to identify the issues. The exercise will also attempt to identify any gaps in knowledge.

There are several ways of mapping a workplace or group of workplaces if your branch covers more than one. It will depend on the type of workplace, its size, and its complexity. If the branch covers only one workplace the simplest option is to draw an actual map of the area. However in other cases it may be easier to list all the workplaces and departments.

Examples of both these approaches are in handout 2b.

When participants fill in the maps make sure they do not only record the number of safety reps, but also issues such as training, information and support.

Where the branch covers a geographical area, rather than just a workplace or group of workplaces, another option is to use a geographical map. You can then use stickers to indicate each workplace where members and potential members are based.

Other types of mapping, such as body mapping, are described in section 1.6 of this guide and can be adapted to this activity.

### Step 1

Start off by getting everyone into groups (aim for four people per group) and explain what process you are going to be using. Emphasise that this is not intended to be a scientific survey but just a way to get a picture of what's going on in the branch. One of the reasons for doing this exercise is to identify those parts of the branch that are most likely to need attention, so it may be that the areas that are most in need of work are those where we have the least information.

Give out handouts 2a and 2b. Handout 2a explains what the group are expected to do.

### Step 2

After they have completed both steps 1 and 2 ask them to report back. Have a brief discussion about some of the issues around representation, such as whether there is a lack of women safety reps, or whether each shift and group (such as cleaners) are properly covered by a safety rep.

This exercise will involve making a map or diagram of the workplaces the branch covers. Mapping is a way of showing where your members, potential members and safety reps are. It will help show you where you need new safety reps, but also will show those areas where you should be targeting your energies.

## 4.2 SESSION TWO: Handout 2a

### Step 1

In your group, sketch out on flipchart paper an outline of the different sites and workplaces your branch covers. Handout 2b gives examples of the kind of method you might want to use. Keep it simple, but also remember to include any areas where you *do not* currently have members. Also remember that some groups of workers may not have a workplace but may work from home or within the community.

### Step 2

Using a different colour or symbol for each of the categories below to mark on your map for each workplace, department or employer:

- the approximate number of members
- the approximate number of potential members
- the number of safety reps.

Mark those places where a safety or health issue has arisen in the last year (you can break this down by issue such as stress, chemicals, manual handling etc). If you do not know the answer to any of these for a particular workplace just mark it with a question mark.

Depending on the situation, you may also ask participants to record the demographics of safety reps (age, gender, ethnicity, etc) or the level of general interest members have in health and safety.

### Step 3

Finish with an overview of the map. Were there any gaps in your information about the workplace, members or safety reps? If so, where would you go to get that information? How do you plan to keep this information up to date in the future?

Try to come to an agreement on which areas on the map need attention. These could be employers, departments, workplaces, areas or groups of workers. Sometimes the areas for which you have the least information are also the ones that need the most attention. Keep a note of these areas as they will be used in other sessions.

## 4.3 SESSION TWO: Handout 2b

Branch mapping: example one



## Branch mapping: example two

### **Head Office**

63 union members

14 non-members

3 safety reps

**HIGH INVOLVEMENT**

### **Area X Office**

40 union members

19 non-members

1 safety rep

**AVERAGE  
INVOLVEMENT**

### **Area Y Office**

31 union members

23 non-members

0 safety reps

**LOW INVOLVEMENT**

### **Area Z Office**

19 union members

3 non-members

2 safety reps

**HIGH INVOLVEMENT**

## 5. SESSION THREE: Recruiting and developing safety reps

### 5.1 Facilitator's notes

This session looks at ways of recruiting and developing safety reps using case studies as well as participants' experiences.

This session will:

- identify commonly perceived obstacles to recruiting safety reps, and possible ways of overcoming these
- use scenarios to develop skills which encourage active members to become safety reps
- identify ways of supporting safety reps
- use the results of the previous session, including the branch map, to identify targets for improving safety reps' organisation.

This session should last around one hour and 30 minutes.

For the session you will need to make sufficient photocopies of handouts 3a and 3b, flipcharts, the branch map and the results of the checklist from Session 1. You will also need flipchart paper and marker pens.

#### Step 1

Introduce the session by explaining the objectives above. Give out handout 3a. Encourage participants to think about issues such as time and resources, as well as their reasons why members might be reluctant to become safety reps. Consider issues such as how women, young and black members could be encouraged if these groups are under-represented. Make a note of the points made on the flipchart and put participants into small groups. Allocate each group one of the cases in handout 3b

to consider. Ask each group to come up with some solutions.

#### Step 2

Get each group to report back on their case study. This should be followed by a discussion on how the branch supports safety reps and how the branch can more effectively draw on its members to support the work with stewards. Among the issues you may want to consider are the questions of time off, training, mentoring, and regular meetings. These should all be recorded on a flipchart for the next step.

#### Step 3

Ask participants to work in twos or threes and look back at the branch plan from Session 1 and the maps from Session 2. Where there are a number of maps, ask each small group to focus on one section (preferably not the section they worked on in the previous session). Using the results of step 2, each group should agree on the potential areas for developing and recruiting new safety reps.

Once they have listed all the potential areas for development, ask them to reduce this to a list of about five priority areas. And work out a programme of action of what practical measures they will take in the branch to address these areas and recruit new safety reps. If there is more than one employer there may be more than one programme.

## 5.2 SESSION THREE: Handout 3a

### Step 1

As a whole group identify the main obstacles to recruiting and supporting new safety reps. List them on a flipchart.

Once these have been listed, think about ways of overcoming these obstacles. Consider:

- how the branch can support safety reps
- the role of safety reps and how they relate to stewards
- the expectations placed on safety reps.

### Step 2

Your facilitator will allocate you a case study to think about. In twos or threes, consider the case study you have been given (handout 3b). Your task is to work out an approach to identify and develop one or more safety reps in the situation described.

Report back to the whole group. Consider the reports of the different groups and discuss those things which your branch currently achieves in relation to both branch support and relationship with members. How could that be improved? Consider the kind of support you think safety reps should realistically be able to expect from the branch, and the relationship that the safety rep should have with the members, and with stewards. Think about training, time off, access to information and other kinds of support. As a whole group, identify what practical steps the branch can take to support safety reps more effectively. Write them down on a flipchart.

### Step 3

In small groups you will now draw up areas for development. Look back at the branch map and the flipchart from step 2.

Bearing in mind the discussions you have just had, identify the main potential areas for development by the branch, based on:

- your workplace map
- the practical steps identified on the flipchart
- where you know you can anticipate particular issues for groups of members.

### Step 4

Back in the large group, agree which of these are most important. Write on a flipchart what practical measures the branch could take to address these areas and recruit new safety reps within your workplace. Make sure these are practical and achievable. Keep these safe for the next session.

## 5.3 SESSION THREE: Handout 3b

### Case studies

#### Case study one

Your branch covers one employer but has members on a number of sites, including some members who work in the community and do not have a base. You have very few safety reps outside the main head office building. The safety reps you do have find it hard to keep in touch with the branch office, and the branch health and safety officer ends up having to do a lot of the work for members who do not have safety reps, which is proving very time consuming.

There are a lot of potential members and you need more safety reps.

How can you identify and develop more safety reps?

What concerns do you think potential safety reps might raise about taking on this role?

How will you respond to these issues?

---

#### Case study two

MagicCarpet Limited is a cleaning company who have won the cleaning contract for your building. The company has around 250 employees, of whom 40 are directly employed to clean within your workplace. Of these, 12 are UNISON members who used to be directly employed by your employer before the service was privatised.

MagicCarpet Limited agreed to recognise UNISON, but in practice the company has ignored most approaches from the branch.

There are no safety reps for this group of staff, although the steward from the resources department has agreed to keep a 'watching brief' over this

group of members. There have been a number of complaints from members employed by MagicCarpet over health and safety issues, and these have gone straight to the branch office.

There are a lot of potential members and you need more safety reps.

How can you identify and develop more safety reps?

What concerns do you think potential safety reps might raise about becoming a safety rep?

How will you respond to these concerns?

---

#### Case study three

One department in your workplace has 40 staff but no safety rep or steward, even though half the employees in this section are UNISON members. Within the workplace as a whole there are around 600 members and eight safety reps. In addition there is a branch health and safety officer. It is known that a considerable number of staff have been off work sick as a result of stress. In addition there is a high turnover of staff. There was a safety rep within this department until last year, but she stood down giving the reason that she was fed up with her colleagues complaining that the union wasn't doing anything for them.

There are a lot of potential members and you need more safety reps.

How can you identify and develop more safety reps?

What concerns do you think potential safety reps might raise about taking on this role?

How would you respond to these concerns?

## 6. SESSION FOUR: Campaigning and recruiting around hazards

### 6.1 Facilitator's notes

**Aim:** To practice campaigning tactics around a health and safety issue

*For this session you will need cards and pens.*

This session should last around one hour.

According to UNISON surveys, many members identify health and safety as the most important workplace issue for them. Organising effectively around health and safety can recruit new members, retrain members and prevent disastrous and unintended changes to members' lives.

#### Step 1

Divide the group into pairs or groups of three and ask everyone to discuss the health and safety issues facing their members. Write these issues on the cards provided (one hazard per card). Tell the group to look through Handout 4 to get an idea of common workplace hazards. Bring the groups together and cluster all the cards with similar issues.

#### Step 2

Talk through the criteria that make up a good campaign issue. Ask the groups to think about which of the hazards they identified on cards would make the best campaign issues.

Have them pick one or two issues, then make a note of:

- which members/potential members would be affected by the issue
- what the branch can/wants to achieve on this issue
- what needs to be done.

## 6.2 SESSION FOUR: Handout 4

### Workplace Hazards

#### **Chemicals and other toxic substances**

These can cause irritation, sensitivity, skin disease, lung disease, reproductive risks and cancer. Dusts can also cause the above reactions and are categorised as: fibrous, toxic, radioactive, irritant, allergenic and/or carcinogenic.

#### **Biological hazards**

These include parasites, insects, bacteria, viruses. Some examples are: MRSA (Methicillin-Resistance Staphylococcus Aureus) and Legionnaires disease.

#### **Skin hazards**

These include injuries from burns, cuts, scrapes and work-induced skin cancer and dermatitis.

#### **Work equipment/machinery hazards**

This can include vibration from tools and equipment causing damage to joints, knees, elbows, shoulders and wrists; back strain caused by manual handling; and injuries to feet, hand, arms and eyes. Hazards can be caused by the wrong equipment for the job; poorly designed or lack of equipment that causes accidents or ergonomic hazards; and failure to provide the right information, instruction and training for users.

#### **Noise**

Current Health and Safety Executive figures suggest that at least 1.3 million employees are exposed to noise levels which can cause permanent hearing loss.

In addition, noise levels that do not cause damage to hearing can have a negative effect on the heart and circulatory systems and can also be a major source of stress.

### **Office hazards**

These can include eye strain, headaches, temperature, repetitive strain injuries, poor lighting, lifting, handling and carrying, slips, trips and falls, and hazardous substances like solvents or photocopier toner.

#### **Violence**

Every week workers are abused, threatened, and beaten up at work by people they come into contact with through their job. Many receive major or minor injuries, but the psychological effects like stress, depression, and fear of work can be even worse. Front line staff who deal with service users/clients are particularly prone to violence from the public.

#### **Stress**

Stress is an increasing problem in all workplaces. It can have physical, emotional and/or psychological affects. In many workplaces it can be caused by job insecurity, harassment/bullying, heavy workloads, long hours or lack of job control.

#### **Other hazards**

There are many hazards not previously covered, such as untidy and overcrowded workplaces, obstructed fire exits, poorly maintained or lack of access to toilets, extremes of temperature, poorly considered shift-patterns, heavy workloads, harassment and working alone.

## 7. SESSION FIVE: What about the employer?

### 7.1 Facilitator's notes

**Aim:** The session will result in an action plan for either developing or strengthening a safety committee structure, and improving management's effectiveness on health and safety.

This session should last around one hour and 15 minutes.

*For this session you will need to make sufficient photocopies of handouts 5a and 5b. You will also need flipchart paper, markers/pens and Blu-tack.*

#### Step 1

As a large group have a discussion on the questions in handout 5a. Where there is more than one employer there may be different answers. Put the answers on a flipchart.

The aim is to get all the issues on the table rather than discuss them at this stage.

#### Step 2

Give out handout 5b and then break into groups of three or four people. Where there is more than one employer involved, cluster the safety reps by employer.

Keep those with a safety committee separate from those without a committee. Ask the groups to do the task in 5a. Those groups without a safety committee will do those marked for them and likewise those with a safety committee.

#### Step 3

Bring the employer groups back into two groups of those without and those with safety committees. Get a report back from each group of what practical measures could be taken.

#### Step 4

Get the proposals from Session 3, on Handout 3a, step 4 and the measures from the last exercise and ask them to develop a single action plan. If there is more than one employer there may be more than one action plan. The action plan should include: What they are going to do; when they are going to do it; and who is going to do it.

## 7.2 SESSION FIVE: Handout 5a

### For groups WITH a safety committee

**Step 1a** Discuss as a large group the following questions:

- Is the safety committee properly constituted with full UNISON involvement?
- Are health and safety problems dealt with effectively on a day-to-day basis in the workplace?
- Do you discuss health and safety policies and strategies with your employer at negotiating committee level?
- Do you work with the other unions on health and safety issues?
- Is UNISON jointly committed with your employer to reducing accidents, incidents and ill-health at work?
- Have specific targets been set to achieve reductions in accidents, incidents and ill-health?
- If so, were these agreed with the unions?

For many of these questions it will not be possible to give a simple “yes” or “no” answer. The idea is just to get an indication of how you feel, rather than an accurate assessment of the level of health and safety management within your employer’s organisation.

**Step 1b** In small groups discuss:

How effective is your health and safety committee?

- Do you receive and jointly analyse safety data from your employer at the committee?
- Do you know how many deaths/serious injuries/three day+ accidents/minor injuries/near misses have occurred in the last year in your employer’s area? What were the details?

- Are line managers involved in improving health and safety standards in the workplace?

### For groups WITHOUT a safety committee

**Step 1a** In small groups discuss:

- How does your employer consult with you on health and safety issues?
- How could that be improved?
- Could a joint safety committee be set up with your employer?
- If not what other arrangements could be made?
- If yes, what kind of committee would you like and how would you go about setting one up?

### Step 2

Come back into a larger group. Using the answers from **Step 1** consider what practical measures could be taken to get more effective consultation with your employer and improve management’s effectiveness on health and safety.

### Step 3

Using your work from the previous sessions (in particular the identified priority areas from Session 3 and the key hazards from Session 4) put together a single action plan. This should include:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Who is going to do it?

This will be your action plan for developing health and safety within your workplace or branch.

## 7.3 SESSION FIVE: Handout 5b

### Safety committees

You will probably already have a safety committee covering your employer. If not you should have one.

If the employer recognises UNISON, the law says that every employer who receives a written request from at least two safety reps must establish a safety committee within three months of the request.

The employer must consult with the safety reps making the request and with reps of any other recognised trade unions. They must also post a notice prominently, stating the composition of the committee and the work areas that it covers.

The Health and Safety Executive's guidance states that working out the size, shape and terms of reference of a safety committee must depend on discussion and agreement with unions.

The role and objectives of a safety committee will depend on the nature of the workplace but will usually include:

- analysing injury and illness trends
- reviewing accident and inspection reports
- developing safety rules
- reviewing safety training
- advising on safety communications and publications.

On the membership of the committees the Health and Safety Executive's guidance recommends that:

- they should be compact
- there should be 50/50 management and union representation

safety advisors, doctors and other safety professionals should also sit on the committee, although only in an advisory capacity.

A senior person with managerial health and safety responsibility should also be present, and be named in the employer's health and safety policy as the person responsible. This person must have sufficient seniority and status to be able to represent the employer fully.

In some branches all safety reps will sit on the safety committee, in others only some will. Other unions may also be represented. It's helpful for union reps to meet separately before the committee, particularly if there are several trade unions in the workplace. The effectiveness of safety committees depends on how well they function and whether unions can actually negotiate improvements. A good safety committee will deal only with strategic and major issues, with day-to-day matters dealt with between safety reps and their line managers. Safety reps should ensure their committees have the power to improve health and safety and are not used by employers just as a way of avoiding taking any action.

Safety reps should not see the safety committee as the only way to raise issues with management. Although these committees are important, urgent issues must be dealt with immediately and not wait for a meeting of the safety committee.

The branch may also decide to raise some health and safety issues with the employers through the negotiating machinery such as a joint consultative committee.

## 8. SESSION SIX: Extending safety reps' rights

### 8.1 Facilitator's notes

**Aim:** to get the groups thinking about ways of extending and improving safety reps' rights.

This session is optional, but should be used if the branch or workplace is likely to benefit from either negotiated roving safety reps or Union Inspection Notices (UINs). You can use either one exercise or both.

Negotiating roving safety reps are of use where a branch has a lot of diverse employers, small workplaces, low member density, or a significant number of contractors on site.

UINs are most useful where there is an active, trained, and effective safety rep structure, but where management often ignores complaints.

*For this session you will need to make sufficient photocopies of handouts 6a and 6b, or 6c, 6d and 6e, as well as flipchart paper, marker pens and Blu-tack.*

Place the participants into small groups – if there are safety reps from more than one employer, group them by employer.

Give out either the handouts for roving safety reps (handout 6a and 6b), or UINs (handout 6c, 6d and 6e).

#### Step 1

In their small groups ask them to complete step one of either the roving safety reps or UINs activity as appropriate. This requires them to read the handouts and discuss the questions on the corresponding handout. Remind them that they will need to report back to the larger group and ask them to write their findings on a flipchart.

#### Step 2

Bring them together and try to get an action plan for them which will allow them to achieve the objective agreed. This is step two on their handouts, and the questions included will guide this activity. If there is more than one employer involved, then there may be more than one action plan.

## 8.2 SESSION SIX: Handout 6a

### Step 1

In small groups of three or four read the handout on roving safety reps (handout 6b).

In your groups consider:

- Are any of the examples likely to be useful in your situation?
- What problems could arise from roving safety reps?
- How could you get management to accept the idea of roving safety reps?

Be prepared to report back.

### Step 2

Come together with the other groups. Each group should report back on the main points coming out of the discussion on Step 1.

If most groups agree that negotiating greater rights for safety reps is a good idea, prepare an action plan for achieving this. This should include:

- What system or systems of roving safety reps would you like to introduce in your workplace?
- How are you going to raise this issue with your employer?
- Who is going to do what?
- What is the timetable for achieving this?

If there is a consensus that you do not need to negotiate greater rights for safety reps, then there is no need for any further activity.

## 8.3 SESSION SIX: Handout 6b

### From the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977

#### **Regulation 3 (1)**

“For the purposes of section 2(4) of the 1974 Act, a recognised trade union may appoint safety representatives from among the employees in all cases where one or more employees are employed by an employer by whom it was recognised.”

### From the Guidance Notes to the Regulations

#### **Guidance Note 7**

“Normally, recognised trade unions will appoint representatives to represent a group or groups of workers of a class for which the union has negotiating rights. The limitation of representation to a particular group or groups should not, however, be regarded as a hindrance to the raising by that representative of general matters affecting the health and safety of employees as a whole.”

#### **Guidance Note 8**

“Equally, these general people principles do not preclude the possibility of a safety representative representing, by mutual agreement between the appropriate unions, more than one group or groups of employees (e.g. In a small workplace or within the organisation of a small employer when the number of recognised trade unions is high relative to the total numbers employed).”

Normally a safety rep can only act as a rep for their employer, and for those employees that UNISON represents.

Some branches have succeeded in extending that right through negotiations.

Examples include:

- Some employers have agreed that safety reps can inspect areas of work where contractors are working, raise issues with the contractors, and discuss safety matters with the contractors' staff.
- In the voluntary sector and schools, where there are a number of small employers, branches have in some cases been able to negotiate that a safety rep covers a number of employers.
- In one ambulance service, management have supported a scheme where 12 roving safety reps cover all the ambulance stations in the area. Previously the policy had been to have one safety rep per station but in practice this had not been achievable.
- One branch got their employer to agree that safety reps would be given time off to visit all locations, even those where there were no members. Safety reps can visit these sites and raise concerns. While these safety reps will not of course represent the employees on these sites, they have been able to recruit a significant number of them, and as a result some of these workplaces now have safety reps.

## 8.4 SESSION SIX: Handout 6c

### Union Inspection Notices (UINs)

#### Step 1

In small groups of three or four, read the handouts on UINs (handouts 6d and 6e).

In your groups consider:

- What training would safety reps need to implement UINs?
- How could you get managers to take UINs seriously?
- What problems would you see arising from introducing a system of UINs?
- Would UINs be a useful means of getting your employer to address major health and safety concerns?

Be prepared to report back.

#### Step 2

Once all the small groups have been brought together, each group should report back. If most groups agree that UINs may be useful, prepare an action plan for getting them. This should include:

- drafting a claim
- how you will raise the issue (through the joint negotiating machinery, safety committee, or directly with management)
- a statement of who does what
- a timetable for achieving UINs.

If the groups do not believe UINs would be useful then there is no need for any further activities.

### What is a Union Inspection Notice (UIN)?

A UIN is a formal notice issued to a manager by an accredited safety rep. It registers that the employer is not complying with health and safety legislation in respect of an identified workplace hazard, describes the action which must be taken to comply with the law and specifies a date by which action must be taken. A UIN is not an enforcement notice. Only statutory Health and Safety Inspectors (e.g. Health and Safety Executive Inspectors and Local Authority Environmental Health Officers) can take enforcement action against an employer in breach of health and safety law.

There is no right to issue a UIN nor, in law, is an employer explicitly required to respond, although that is certainly implied in the safety reps' regulations. However, branches can negotiate a voluntary system of UINs with their employer. This note gives a checklist of what should be covered in any agreement.

Please note that a UIN is not an appropriate way of dealing with very serious hazards that need immediate attention.

## 8.5 SESSION SIX: Handout 6d

### Who can issue a UIN?

A UIN can be issued by a trained and accredited safety rep.

### In what circumstances may a UIN be issued?

A UIN may be issued where a breach of health and safety law can be identified. It is expected that the use will be rare. It is not a substitute for normal inspections and negotiations.

A UIN may be issued to deal with a hazard that does not pose an imminent and serious risk to the health and safety of employees individually or collectively, and where other action has failed to get the problem resolved within a reasonable time.

A UIN may also be issued to deal with lower level hazards that have been the subject of frequent complaints to the line manager, but where the manager has failed to take appropriate action.

Where the hazard is serious, advice should be taken from the UNISON regional office.

### What steps must be taken before a UIN is issued?

Before issuing a UIN in relation to a hazard, the safety rep must be convinced of four things:

- that there is a breach of health and safety law
- that the breach has been brought to the attention of the employer in a proper manner through agreed channels
- that the manager has failed to respond appropriately within a reasonable time
- that the matter is not already the subject of

enforcement action by HSE or local authority inspectors.

The issuing of a UIN is a serious matter. It is a sign that the normal machinery for resolving health and safety problems at work has failed.

### How should a UIN be issued?

Branches should ensure that they have agreed the wording of the UIN with their employer. A draft UIN is shown in handout 6e. All sections of the notice must be completed carefully. It should clearly identify the legislation that has been contravened and issued to the appropriate manager.

The steps the manager should take to remedy the situation must be explained briefly but clearly.

The amount of time that the manager should have to respond to the UIN should be specified in the agreement with the employer. However, what is reasonable is likely to depend on the nature of the hazard, but should not be less than seven days after the serving of the notice and, given that it may involve developing a policy or replacing equipment, may be up to 28 days.

The agreement should also specify who the completed UIN should be delivered to.

A copy of the UIN should be posted in a prominent position within the workplace and drawn to the attention of affected employees. The safety rep should keep a copy of the UIN. In addition a copy should be sent immediately to the branch health and safety officer. The issuing of the UIN must be reported to the next meeting of the safety committee.

### **What happens if the manager disputes the UIN or does not act?**

If the manager disputes the UIN and/or fails to take appropriate action within the designated time, there must be clear agreement about what steps the employer will take.

The agreement must specify what happens. There are various options: One solution would be to agree that any manager who does not respond to a UIN within the agreed period shall be subject to disciplinary action.

In addition, where a manager does not respond, or does not take effective action to remedy the breach, then a more senior manager and the employer's health and safety advisor should be asked to intervene within an agreed timetable.

If, after senior management has intervened, remedial action is still not taken, nor a timetable for remedial action agreed, the safety rep may either raise the breach at the safety committee, notify the branch (who can then tell the enforcing authority), or both.

Remember that health and safety should be managed through a partnership approach with safety reps and employers working together using the local negotiating machinery to achieve change. If this fails, and legislation has been contravened, the Union Inspection Notices may be appropriate.

## 8.6 SESSION SIX: Handout 6e

### Draft Union Inspection Notice

To:

---

[name of manager as appropriate]

---

[name of the safety rep issuing the notice]

appointed as the safety rep by UNISON under the Safety Representative & Safety Committee Regulations 1977 (SRSC), believe that you, as an employer, are contravening the following statutory provision(s):

---

[Regulation(s) contravened]

The contravention is occurring at:

---

[address or area of the workplace]

The reason(s) for my opinion is/are as follows:

---

The said contravention(s) or, as the case may be, the matters occasioning them, should be remedied by:

---

[date]

The following action should be taken:

---

[Signature of safety rep] [Date]

Copy to branch health and safety officer, full-time UNISON officer and employer's safety officer.

## 9. Follow up

If the day has been successful then the participants will go away with a lot of fresh ideas and a plan of action which should be drawn up from the outcome of the various sessions.

However quite often plans remain just words on a flipchart. It is important to ensure that the momentum achieved during the previous session is not lost.

There are three things you can do to help prevent that happening.

Get the participants to agree to setting up a small working party to oversee the implementation of the action plan(s).

Make sure that regular reports are given to the branch committee, or safety representatives committee if one exists

Get all the participants together again in six months time to review how far they have got. This should only take an hour or so.

If you do manage to change things through the use of this pack then please let the Health and Safety Unit at the UNISON Centre know. Whether it is through more safety representatives, new ways of working, successful negotiations of UINs or roving safety representatives, we will publicise your successes and use them to encourage other branches.

## **Your comments**

UNISON welcomes comments on this pack. Please either write to: The Health and Safety Unit, UNISON Centre, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY ; or email: [healthandsafety@unison.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@unison.co.uk)







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a million  
voices  
for  
public  
services

add  
your  
voice

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for a fairer society  
[unison.org.uk/million](http://unison.org.uk/million)