



**Preparing for industrial action**

Workshop W10

May 2022

LAOS workshops available from learningandorganising@unison.co.uk

**Preparing for industrial action**

What are the aims of this activity?

* To create a detailed plan of action in the run up to industrial action
* To achieve a clear understanding of UNISON’s Industrial action guide and how to respond to issues which might arise
* To make a plan for recruiting and organising around the industrial action

Who is it aimed at and where can it be used?

It is for branch activists, officers, or strike committee members and can be used as part of a branch or workplace meeting or as a stand-alone activity.

Who can run it?

Any rep, branch officer, lay tutor or organiser with some experience of running discussions.

What resources do you need?

Branch mapping information including where reps are (include all reps, not just stewards and pensions contacts) and which employers have been included in the ballot for industrial action

UNISON Guide to industrial action

Copies of handouts from back of pack in student numbers

Strike pledge

Activity 3 – Statements (at back of this pack)

Flipchart, marker pens, laptop, post it notes, biros

Campaign materials relevant to the action, eg Worth It materials.

Note: there is not a course book for this but handouts are included at the back of the materials.

Preparation

Discuss with the branch whether they have set up a strike committee to carry out day to day work in relation to the strike preparation, reporting to the branch committee. (See Guide for more information on this)

Time

The pack contains 4 activities each lasting around 60 minutes.

Tutor notes for Activity 1: Getting a big turn out on the day

Approximately 60 mins

**Aim**

To map out which workplaces were balloted and identify workplace leaders to help

**Task 1**

Introduce this by explaining the information you have available about workplaces/employers that have been balloted for industrial action.

Allocate these around the group, so that small groups are looking at workplaces they are familiar with. Hand out copies of the planning sheet (Handout 1), a list of balloted employers, and relevant RMS data on membership and workplace reps.

Ask each small group to complete the first 3 columns of the table in Handout 1, and copy more as needed. Ask participants to write down under ‘Names of key reps’ **all** reps who are active in those workplaces, who might be able to assist with organising talking to members about coming out on strike.

Complete the first 3 columns to start with – the remaining columns on organising pickets will be completed later.

**Task 2**

Give out Handout 2, and ask them to discussion the following (also on the handout)

* How can you most efficiently arrange to brief the workplace reps you have listed above?
* How can you assist the reps in talking to all their members in the run up to action?
* What is the best way of ensuring all reps are kept up to date and provided with the necessary resources?
* Who will do what in terms of taking forward your plan?

Make sure that the branch secretary or branch pensions lead makes a note of all points.

Tutor notes for Activity 2: Talking to members and escalating actions

Approx 45 mins

**Aim**

* To identify actions leading up to industrial action
* To introduce the pledge and record sheet

**Task**

a) Put participants into pairs/threes, and handout and explain the strike pledge and record sheet (Handout 3). Note: this will need to be updated with an appropriate pledge before you copy it.

This is a means of keeping track of members’ intentions and actions as well as a tool to encourage them to commit to come out on strike.

b) Secondly, ask everyone to identify actions which members can be asked to carry out in the run up to the day of action. These might be actions to help ensure a high turnout on the strike day or to put the case to the public about why this strike is going ahead.

Tell them to write down anything at all which might raise awareness about the issue, both in the workplace and with the public, from wearing a sticker to leafleting, writing letters to the local paper etc. As ideas come up, get them each written on a separate Post-It note.

c) Once this is done, put all the post its along a wall or table and ask participants to help put these in order of intensity – starting with low intensity actions like wearing a sticker and move upwards from there. Make sure all actions are added to the list at the back of the pack.

Ask everyone to discuss how giving members small actions to complete might encourage them to go on strike if they are wavering.

Make sure these actions are also added to the list in Handout 2.

Tutor notes for Activity 3: Talking to members and mobilising

Approximately 45 minutes

**Aim**

To practice conversations with members who may be anxious about going on strike

**Task**

Note: in advance, add any relevant statements to the resource cards for this activity.

Introduce the following method for talking to members about going on strike. Write up key points on flipchart.

**Affirm – listen, and acknowledge the point the member is making**

‘I can see why you say that. Losing a day’s pay is a big deal, especially when you’ve got kids as you have...’

‘I hear what you are saying – it has been just one thing after another, with Covid and the cost of living..’

**Answer** – **respond to the point the member is making, and ask follow up questions:**

**For example:**

‘.. do you know what this pension change is equivalent to?

If this goes ahead, it is the equivalent to a 3% pay cut – every year. That’s a lot more than 1 days pay ..’

‘What do you think the union should do about pay? ..

You are part of the union – we’ve got to stand up and be counted about the fact that our wages have fallen back so much since 2010 ..’

**Redirect – get the member to see that there is a way forward, and get them thinking about actions they could carry out.**

‘Did you know that there are lots of unions involved in this day of action, across the UK? Schools, hospitals, government offices will all be affected.

X% of members who participated in the ballot voted yes. If we organise for this strike, we really can make a difference .. Can you help in the run up to the day of action? Here are some of the things you could help us with ...which can you do?’

Put participants into pairs/threes, give each group one of the following statements in the resources section at the end of this pack.

Ask each group to plan out a conversation with a member using the method set out above.

Take feedback from each group.

Tutor note for Activity 4: Dealing with practical issues

Approx 60 mins

**Aims**

To discuss responses to practical issues and questions which might arise on the day

**Task**

Ask everyone to spend a few minutes in pairs/threes making a note of the main issues they think might arise in the run up to the strike. They should write each issue on a separate post it note.

Collate the post its and ask each small group to find out the answers to their set of questions using the *UNISON Industrial Action Handbook* (2019)*.*

Make sure the following issues are all covered. If necessary, add these in.

* Can someone strike if they join after the ballot?
* What if a member is on leave and has already booked it?
* What if a member wants to take leave on the day of action?
* What if a member wants to call in sick on the strike day?
* What about members in the branch in an employer that hasn’t been balloted?
* When will the strike start? What if members are already at work on a night shift?
* What about exemptions and emergency cover?
* What about a member has only been at that job for a few weeks?
* What if the employer tries to intimidate members into not striking?
* Is there a hardship fund?

**Handout 1: Getting a big turn out on the day -** *Copy for each participant*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Workplace | Number of members - note different shift patterns and approx numbers, and include members who are based in the community who would count the workplace as a base. | Names of key reps – note if they are pensions champions or contacts | Other unions in this workplace? | Complete after activity Organising picket line | |
| Arrangements for picket line in place, including register? | Lead rep on picket line |
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**Handout 2: Action plan** *Copy for each participant*

**To discuss:**

* How can you most efficiently arrange to brief the workplace reps you have listed above?
* How can you assist the reps in talking to all their members in the run up to the day of action?
* What is the best way of ensuring all reps are kept up to date and provided with the necessary resources?
* Who will do what in terms of taking forward your plan?

**Possible follow up actions**

Talk to 5 members in your workplace about coming out on strike

Talk to non members about joining and coming out on strike

Wear a badge

Handout ( ) leaflets to x people

Talk to ( ) of your family and friends about why this strike is taking place

**Please add below other specific actions you have identified:**

**Key tasks**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What?** | **Lead person** | **By when** |
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**Handout 3: (for Activity 2). Talking to members:** *copy for each participant – amend as appropriate to the action*

**Pledge and record sheet**

**I agree to support the the strike on xxxxx and to help UNISON in getting a good turnout to ......**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Member? If not, ask them to join** | **Contact info** | **Workplace** | **I agree to the above pledge** | **I will carry out the following actions in the run up to** | **Follow up by** | **Done?** |
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**Resource for Activity 3: Talking to members**

**Copy and cut into sections – add further points/ amend as appropriate to the action**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I don’t believe this strike will make the employer change its mind – there is no point | What happens after the strike day – will there be more strikes? |
| I’m already worried about redundancy. Won’t it be more likely they’ll get rid of me If I go on strike? | I can’t afford to strike |
| Why should I strike? | I’m worried about the impact a strike will have on the clients/patients I work with |
|  |  |

**Resource: Organising a picket line (copy and cut into sections)**

**Picketing: true or false?**

A. It is important not to tell the police in advance about where you will be picketing

**......................................................................................**

**Picketing: true or false?**

B. A picket line can have up 6 people on it

**......................................................................................**

**Picketing: true or false?**

C. Members from another branch can join the picket line

**......................................................................................**

**Picketing: true or false?**

D. All pickets should wear armbands

**......................................................................................**

**Picketing: true or false?**

E. A person who wishes to cross a picket line must be allowed to do so

**......................................................................................**

**Picketing: true or false?**

F. It is permitted to persuade workers who aren’t employed at a workplace not to cross a picket line (eg post, suppliers, etc)

