

What to do if you lose facility time

UNISON has produced extensive guidance for branches on defending facility time, when employers threaten to cut it. You can download the guide pdf by [clicking here](#).

If an employer insists on taking away trade union facility time, and the branch is unable to resist this attack, then this will clearly leave you in a difficult position. Branches will need to consider how you can best continue to negotiate, represent, organise and recruit with less facility time. This short factsheet aims to give branches some initial pointers about what to do next. There are a series of actions you may want to consider:

1. It is vital that part of the branch's response to a loss of facility time is an organising one. For example, if the employer removes some or all of the branch's entitlement to reps on full-time release, it is vital the branch is able to call on more reps who can share the load, using some facility time to carry out UNISON duties, alongside their 'day jobs'.
2. Similarly, it may be worth reviewing the allocation of the facility time which is left to ensure it is being used as efficiently as possible. For example, in situations where an employer hasn't reduced overall facility time but has limited the amount that any one individual can take: do you have reps who aren't using much facility time, but could be persuaded to do more? This might take the pressure off those activists whose time has been cut.
3. Branches should also be in touch with regions through campaigns to defend facility time. And after any loss of facility time is confirmed, the branch should discuss with the region what needs to be done – whether any additional resources are available from the region, and what the priorities should be, as the branch seeks to make do with less facility time. The branch could refuse to attend certain meetings that the employer wants to have. Remember, facility time brings benefits to the whole organisation. It may act as an effective reminder to the employer if they are suddenly unable access the expertise of UNISON reps because of their attack on facility time.
4. Particularly for local government branches, it may be worth engaging with the opposition political group. There are several examples of branches running

joint campaigns with opposition Labour Groups for the return of facility time. When the political stripe of the council changes, this can then be put into action.

5. Following a cut in facility time, there are some sources of extra funding which branches should consider applying for, to help you get round these problems.

Section C of the Branch Funding Formula

Branches facing short term financial problems or continuing exceptional needs can seek assistance and request special funding under Section C of UNISON's Branch Funding Formula. It would be beneficial in such circumstances for branches to work more actively with regions, as in creating targeted initiatives.

For more information, branches should speak to your Regional Organiser.

Regional Pool

Each region has a Regional Pool of funds available to assist branches in delivering planned actions from their annual joint branch assessment.

Requests for funds can be made by branches or groups of branches in the form of a detailed plan identifying intended actions, objectives, budgeted expenditure and how success is to be measured.

The approval of bids and general management of the fund is overseen by an appropriate regional lay body.

Bids should be focused on recruitment and organising and tend to be for discrete resources to support a specific initiative or campaign.

The Regional Pool cannot be used to fund UNISON staff posts, but it can be used to fund branch-based staff – providing this is time-limited and

is not used to cover administrative tasks.

For further information and assistance in putting forward a bid to the Regional Pool please contact your Regional Organiser.

Fighting Fund

The Fighting Fund was established in 2010 to assist branches and regions to meet the challenges of increasing cuts and fragmentation.

Branches or groups of branches can bid for organisers to work on dedicated recruitment and organising projects in areas where there is an identified need through the joint branch assessment and regional planning processes.

Organisers are recruited on fixed term contracts via UNISON's standard recruitment and selection processes and line managed by the appropriate region. Project performance is monitored by a UNISON wide monitoring and evaluation scheme as appropriate to ensure that projects are effectively assessed and best practice can be identified and shared.

Bidding bodies will be expected to make a suitable financial contribution to the fund in order to sustain the fund and enable other bodies to benefit from this resource in the future.

This opportunity is also available to regions and UNISON Centre departments.

Requests to the Fighting Fund are made in the form of a detailed plan identifying intended actions, objectives and budgeted expenditure to the appropriate region in the first instance with approval overseen by the Presidential Team.

For further information and assistance in putting forward a bid to the Fighting Fund please contact your Regional Organiser.