

## Having a conversation about the UNISON National Executive Council (NEC) elections 2019

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Workshops are available from [learningandorganising@unison.co.uk](mailto:learningandorganising@unison.co.uk)



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## Quick Conversations Workshop

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### Aims:

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- To prepare stewards and activists to have a one-to-one conversation with UNISON members about voting in the National Executive Council (NEC) 2019 elections.
- To build confidence in talking to members they don't know about voting in the NEC elections.

### Who is the workshop aimed at?

This workshop is aimed at UNISON stewards, contacts and activists. Ideally it should be run just before you are holding a branch event or are planning to talk to members.

### Resources:

**Reaction Cards.** You will need to cut these up before the session. The reaction cards are all common questions that might come up in a conversation.

### Useful links:

[unison.org.uk/elections](https://unison.org.uk/elections)

### Elections and democracy

<https://www.unison.org.uk/about/our-organisation/lay-structure-democracy-and-elections>

### Election procedures

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2018/12/NEC-2019-Election-procedures.pdf>

## Timings – One Hour

### Planning for the Session

If you want to take a 'learn and do' approach to this workshop, you may want to think about planning some organising and recruitment activity just after the session.

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### Workshop timings

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| Introductions | Ten minutes    |
| Step One      | Ten minutes    |
| Step Two      | Twenty minutes |
| Step Three    | Twenty minutes |

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### Introductions

Say to the group:-

This session will help us to talk to UNISON members about the importance of voting in the National Executive Council (NEC) elections. This could be as part of a branch meeting or talking to members in the workplace or as part of day-to-day contact with members.

### First of all, what is the NEC?

NEC stands for national executive council. A group of ordinary members of the union – people just like you, who work in public services. Every two years, we elect a new committee who will attend regular meetings and decide what the union will do.

There are 67 members who make up the NEC. They are volunteers who don't get paid but they do get travel expenses to attend council meetings.

### What do the NEC do?

The NEC is the senior decision-making body of UNISON – they guide the union's policy and campaign priorities and made the big decisions about how the union is run.

Sub-committees of the NEC then look after specific areas of the union's activities in more detail. These sub-committees focus on staffing, services to members,

policy, development and organisation, finance, industrial action, our campaign funds and our international work.

The NEC also champions public services. The NHS, education, local councils and other services need UNISON to stand up for them. The NEC makes sure our public service agenda is prioritised.

### **How will the elections take place?**

NEC members are elected by all members of UNISON via a postal vote. Members elect candidates to represent their region and their service group. There are also additional seats for Black members, young members and disabled members.

As with all other UNISON elections, the union's principles of proportionality and fair representation means that two-thirds of the seats on the NEC are reserved for women. And 13 seats are reserved for low-paid women members.

### **When will the elections take place?**

Voting is open from **15 April to 17 May**.

A helpline on 0800 0 857 857 is open for any queries or in case members don't receive a ballot paper or if they lose them.

Remind everyone to make sure that they allow enough time to ensure that their vote is received within the closing date.

### **Finally, why is having a one-to-one conversation about the NEC elections so important?**

Studies show that people are more likely to vote if they have been spoken to on a one-to-one basis.

So, having a one-to-one conversation with members about the democracy of the union and why it is important for members to use their vote to have their voices heard will help to encourage turn-out in the NEC election.

### **What approach are we going to have when having a conversation?**

- We have to think about how to introduce ourselves.
- We want to try and establish a rapport with members.
- Ask some good opening questions which will encourage people to chat about issues that they care about.
- Find out a bit about that person. And leave a hook to go back to talk to them.

## Step One

Ask the group put themselves in a line. At one end should be those who love talking to people they don't know about UNISON and at the other end those who don't really like it all.

Explore a bit further with the group.

Why do you feel OK about talking to people about the union?

What prevents you from doing it?

Things that may come out of the discussion:-

- Concern that some people like to keep their political opinions to themselves.
- Don't want to seem to be too pushy / like a sales person.
- Quite like finding out about people / what their issues are.
- Having a conversation about voting can be awkward but we are used to talking to members about union and workplace issues and talking about voting uses the same skills.
- Get a knock back and it's difficult.

This should take around **ten minutes**.

## Step Two

Split the larger group into smaller groups of four.

You can even pretend that you are talking to UNISON members at a branch meeting or in the workplace. Agree between the group what the purpose of the chat is and how you will introduce yourselves.

Distribute each person one or two of the reaction cards.

One person should be the member and the other person should be the activist trying to get the worker to stop and start a conversation.

The conversation shouldn't last longer than five minutes and could last less. Go through all of the reaction cards. If someone gets the brush off make sure that next time they get a good conversation.

Ensure that participants understand that the aim of the practice is to:-

- Establish a rapport.
- Ask questions.
- Ensure they pick up on clues.
- Try not to talk *at* people
- And encourage members who are undecided about voting to *vote!*

Ask each group to have a go at it!

### **Step Three**

After the practice session ask the participants the following questions:-

- How did you think that went?
- Anything missing?
- Next time?
- Did you manage to ask open questions and listen?
- Anyone get a hook to go back and talk to the person again?

Conclude the workshop by planning:-

- How you will go about having these conversations with members?
- When?
- What do you need to do?

Emphasise the importance of having a way of reporting back anything you have learned during the conversations, for example, problems raised. Also ensure that firm plans are made to follow up the activity.

Remind everyone about the importance of using their vote in the NEC elections.

Make sure your vote counts!

**Quickie Conversation - Reaction Cards**

**Cut out these questions and hand to the group**

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**I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE UNISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) ELECTIONS THIS YEAR!**

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**I CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO VOTE IN THE NEC ELECTIONS – I'M BORED OF ELECTIONS!**

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**I DON'T KNOW WHAT MEMBERS OF THE NEC DO?**

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**ALL CANDIDATES ARE THE SAME!**

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**WHEN IS THE CLOSING DATE FOR THE ELECTION?**

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**HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT THE CANDIDATES STAND FOR?**

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## **SOME SUGGESTED ANSWERS!**

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### **I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE UNISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) ELECTIONS THIS YEAR!**

Yes – elections take place every two years, with members receiving a ballot paper with a prepaid envelope to return it to an independent scrutineer (an independent person who checks the ballot is fair and counts the votes).

Results are usually announced around one month after the voting deadline.

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### **I CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO VOTE IN THE NEC ELECTIONS – I'M BORED OF ELECTIONS**

Taking part in the UNISON NEC elections is an important part of the democracy of the union.

Decisions the NEC make affect how the union works for you. So choosing who is on the NEC is a really important part of being a union member.

So please use your vote and participate in our proud democratic tradition.

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### **I DON'T KNOW WHAT MEMBERS OF THE NEC DO?**

The NEC is the senior decision-making body of UNISON. They guide the union's policy and campaign priorities and make the big decisions about how the union is run.

Sub-committees of the NEC then look after specific areas of the union's activities in more detail – including staffing, services to members, policy, development and organisation, finance, industrial action, our campaign funds and international work.

The NEC also champions public services – the NHS, education, local councils and other services that need UNISON to stand up for them.

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## **ALL CANDIDATES ARE THE SAME!**

All candidates have to be UNISON members but they are all different. They are as diverse as UNISON is! And the NEC is made up of a broad range of ages and backgrounds.

The NEC makes decisions that will directly impact on your life and the lives of many ordinary working people.

Read the statements and compare the issues that are important to you.

Decide whose judgement you trust, who you think will best represent you and who you think best represents what you want from your union. Then vote for them!

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## **WHEN IS THE CLOSING DATE FOR THE ELECTION?**

The ballot opens on 15 April and closes on 17 May.

So if you haven't received a ballot paper or if you have lost them give the helpline a ring on: 0800 0 857 857

And don't forget to make sure that you have allowed enough time to ensure that your vote is received within the closing date.

Make sure that your vote counts!

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## **HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT THE CANDIDATES STAND FOR?**

You will be able to find out more about what each candidate stands for when you receive your ballot papers – they all write what they stand for in an election address. So read through the statements and decide whose judgement you trust and who you think will best represent you.

Then make your choice and vote!

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# Learning & organising