

# Planning for the UNISON National Executive Council (NEC) elections 2021

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

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## Planning for the NEC elections – learning resource

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### Aims:

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- To prepare branches, stewards and activists to contact UNISON members about voting in the National Executive Council (NEC) 2021 elections.
- To build confidence in contacting members they don't know about voting in the NEC elections.

### Who is the learning resource aimed at?

This learning resource is a useful tool for UNISON branches, stewards, contacts and activists.

### How does it work?

The resource has some handy links and tips to help signpost branches to some easy steps to get involved.

And if you do think that you might get the chance to speak to members, there is a Short Learning Activity to help you have a go at **Having a Conversation about the NEC Elections** – or this could be used as a session during a virtual branch meeting (if you already have one planned).

### Useful links:

Member information page: <https://www.unison.org.uk/nec2021>

Activist Q&A: <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/our-organisation/lay-structure-democracy-and-elections/current-elections/national-executive-council-elections-2021/nec-elections-2021-activist-qa/>

### 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/2020/12/NEC-2021-Election-procedures.pdf>

## Introduction

In the run-up to the NEC elections, UNISON regions are planning to contact branches to have a chat and signpost useful resources.

### What can branches and activists do?

As our activists, you have a role in encouraging participation in our elections – this is not about supporting particular candidates, but providing general information about the ballot, when it opens, why it matters and encouraging members to vote.

The more people that vote, the better for our democracy, and the better the union can serve our members.

Please note that we're reminding all branches that while they can encourage people to vote, they must not use any UNISON resources to support any individual candidate or groups of candidates. You can find out more in the [Election Procedures Guidance](#).

### Next, some questions answered!

#### 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 do.

The members of the NEC 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 there are seats reserved for low-paid women members.

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

The member ballot will open on **4 May and closes on 27 May 2021**. The results will be announced on 11 June 2021.

Voting packs will be sent to members' homes direct from Civica Election Services (CES) is the returning officer and the independent scrutineer.

If members haven't not received their pack by 13 May, then they should contact UNISONdirect on the number below.

As usual, there is a ballot helpline. The helpline will open on 13 May.

Phone: 0800 0 857 857. Text phone: 0800 0 967 968.

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

## **But what about coronavirus?**

The current pandemic certainly presents unique challenges for this election, with reduced access to some workplaces meaning less direct contact with members.

Safety remains the most important priority so we will need to rely far more on online conversations and digital communications where face to face contact is not possible.

## What easy steps can branches take to encourage members to vote?

- Promoting it on social media. There are some [graphics and a video](#) that you can use on your branch Facebook and Twitter.
- Making the elections visible in workplaces. There's a [poster](#) that you can forward on to reps and ask them to print out and stick up on noticeboards.
- Telling members about the elections in any emails or newsletters you send out.

## And the most important one of all, why is having a conversation about the NEC elections so important?

- You'll know better than anyone that talking is what works best! It's going to make a big difference if, in every interaction with the branch, members are asked 'have you voted?' That conversation is so important for helping us get a good turnout in these elections.
- 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 works when having a conversation?

- Think about how to introduce yourself.
- 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.
- 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.

- Remind everyone about the importance of using their vote in the NEC elections.
- And finally, remind everyone to make sure your vote counts!

### **Quick learning activity: have a conversation practice!**

- Have a look at the conversation questions on the page below – you can print them off and cut out – or use in a virtual meeting.
- Spend a couple of minutes thinking about how you would answer the question if a member said it to you!
- Next, plan your answer in response to the question! What would you say?
- To help frame your answer, you'll find some suggested answers on the following page.

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**POSSIBLE CONVERSATION QUESTIONS!**

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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.

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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?**

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**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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