

# Campaigning in the 2026 Senedd elections

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A guide for UNISON Cymru activists and members

This guide is written to support activists, members and branches who want to make a difference in the 2026 Senedd elections. Whether you're an experienced campaigner, or this is your first time getting involved in elections, together we can use this opportunity to speak up for workers' rights, pay and public services. The guide provides some important information, key facts and figures, and a variety of ways to get involved.

## What are these elections, and why are they important?

Key elections are happening across the UK on 7 May 2026. These include:

- Welsh Senedd
- Scottish Parliament
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- English Councils (number and full list in link below)<sup>i</sup>
- London Boroughs

The Senedd is increasing in size and a new proportional representation voting system will be used, which means everyone's vote will count equally in every part of Wales.

The outcomes from these elections will have a direct impact on UNISON members. The people elected will control the Welsh Government, which runs the Welsh NHS and Welsh education system and decides on funding local government and social care where lots of members work. They'll make key decisions about the communities where we *all* live and work.

It's also an opportunity for parties to build support and power leading up to the next General Election.

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<sup>i</sup> A full list can be found here [2026 United Kingdom local elections - Wikipedia](#)

## How can I get involved?

### 1. Talk with fellow members, friends and families

UNISON is a trusted source of information for its members and we're leaders in the workplace. Having conversations about political issues isn't always easy, but when it's about how politics affects jobs, terms and conditions and the public services our members deliver and use, it's legitimate. This doesn't have to be at a big formal meeting – often a casual exchange at the tea point, in the staff room or in the canteen is better. Discussions at home or with friends on the same topics can be equally as effective. Some talking points are set out on page 8.

UNISON Cymru will publish a manifesto to help you with these conversations. It will set out the priorities that activists and members have for the next Welsh Government.

UNISON is also organising a series of townhall-style events across Wales to encourage activists, members and everyone else in their community to get together in person to discuss and learn more about the issues at stake in the election and UNISON's proposals for a brighter future for Wales. Your branch can organise similar events with the support of your Regional Organiser and the policy team.

### 2. Share news

Most branches send newsletters to their members. Although it could create problems for branches if they used their newsletter to publish political attacks on a particular party, it would be legitimate for a local government branch, for example, to share factual news with members about what particular councils were doing and what their leaders are saying – e.g. highlighting job cuts or speeches about changing public sector pensions.

### **3. Encourage members to vote**

Boosting turnout can have a big impact on results – especially in the context of the new voting system and multiparty environment where just a few votes can separate four or five parties. Everyone with the right to live and work in Wales can register to vote in a Senedd election, including 16 and 17 year olds. In this context, ensuring members know elections are taking place and how to vote (e.g. registering for a postal vote and knowing about the voting system) can be really effective.

UNISON Cymru will be running a dedicated campaign to encourage members to get their colleagues and family members registered to vote up to the deadline of 20 April. You can request a pack of posters and leaflets to distribute in your workplace and community from UNISON Cymru Print team via [cprint@unison.co.uk](mailto:cprint@unison.co.uk).

### **4. Phone Banking for a Fair Pay Deal for Care Workers**

Get trained to have effective organising conversations with care workers in this exciting Senedd 2026 pilot project.

In a first for UNISON, you will be part of an organising team calling care workers and helping them to build their collective power for the Senedd elections. If you want to make a difference in the election, but aren't sure about campaigning for a political party, this could be the perfect opportunity for you.

Care staff in the private and third sector are among the most undervalued and low paid members of UNISON, and have everything to win or lose in the Senedd 2026 Elections. You can help them win and put pressure on political parties in Wales to meet their demands for fair pay. All volunteers will attend an induction training event online or in-person, before joining a phone banking session to help get the vote out for a fair pay deal for care workers.

## 5. Volunteer to help with a political party or a partner campaign organisation

The union's Labour Link provides a route into party political campaign activity. You can ask your Labour Link officer in the branch about who to contact – or ask your local organiser. For those who've not done this before, this might seem like a daunting step, particularly when some of Labour's policies are unpopular, but a warm welcome and lots of support will be provided.

Alternatively, you could volunteer with Hope not Hate. This is an organisation that works in communities all year round to counter the rise of the far-right. They often organise leaflet drops in key areas and weekends of action – where UNISON members join with likeminded groups and members of the public to distribute materials in their communities.

Find out more here: [hopenothate.org.uk/action](https://hopenothate.org.uk/action)

## 6. Sign up to UNISON's new network – tackling Reform UK

UNISON has a network of members and activists who want to join the union's campaign against Reform UK and their anti-worker and anti-public service policies. By joining the network, you'll be the first to hear any updates, be sent information and materials, and have the opportunity to shape the campaign.

Sign up here: [unison.org.uk/take-action-for-public-services](https://unison.org.uk/take-action-for-public-services)

## What can and can't UNISON do?

Political campaign activity by trade unions is tightly regulated.

All political campaign activity that incurs an actual or notional cost must be paid for by the political fund, and there are strict caps on spending. Also, undertaking any kind of organised political campaign activity for or against a political party in the workplace is likely to cause problems with employers, and some members won't be able to engage because they're in politically restricted roles.

That said, there's still a huge amount we can all do, and support available.

## How can I get support to campaign?

Support is available to help members, activists and branches with your campaigning.

### **“Use Your Vote in Wales” education sessions**

You and other members can join a “Use your vote in Wales” webinar that UNISON Cymru’s Policy Unit are running in the lead up to the Senedd election. The session will help people to understand the issues at stake in May, how devolution and the new voting system works, how to register and how to vote. It is not party-political and aims to encourage participation in Welsh democracy.

You can also request an in person or online session for your branch, and a video version will be available too. The Policy Unit will support union learning reps, branch education officers and other activists to deliver the session to their colleagues in their workplaces.

### **LaOS and UNISON College**

There is support available to help members and activists with getting involved in the election.

Learning and Organising Services (LaOS) and UNISON College can organise member learning and activist training sessions on everything from challenging far right narratives and having difficult conversations to building campaign capacity. The UNISON Cymru learning team has organised a session on Public Speaking skills and the social care organising team will be running conversations training for activists in targeted areas of Wales. The organiser for your branch, the regional education team or your learning rep if you have one, can help you get involved with this.

## Materials

From early 2026 printed materials will be available, including the UNISON Cymru manifesto and voter registration posters and flyers. Some will be related to basic citizenship issues (e.g. register for a postal vote, don't forget to use your vote on polling day) – others will be more party political. The latter can't be displayed or shared when activists are on facility time.

To be the first to know when materials are available, join the tackling Reform UK network: [unison.org.uk/take-action-for-public-services](https://unison.org.uk/take-action-for-public-services).

## Campaign Fund

The Cymru region has secured funding from the Campaign Fund for the voter registration campaign, "Use Your Vote" sessions, townhall events and other elements of the Senedd election campaign.

For branches who want to do local campaigning (e.g. produce bespoke leaflets within the framework of the overall campaign), there's scope to bid to the Campaign Fund. This kind of activity would be subject to the conditions and restrictions above – but it can be done. Remember that it's against the rules governing local election campaigns to produce any literature that's explicitly for or against a particular candidate.

More details about accessing the Campaign Fund are here:

[unsn.uk/campaign-fund](https://unsn.uk/campaign-fund)

## What about the Reform UK threat?

Following their breakthrough at the General Election in 2024 and their success in English local elections in 2025, Reform UK is aiming to make Wales the testbed for the Thatcherite policies in the NHS and education they would introduce if they were to take power in Westminster.

Reform UK don't care about Wales, Welsh democracy or the Welsh language. They have no dedicated leader in Wales, and very few Wales-specific policies. Their only Senedd Member was suspended for racism, their former Welsh leader is in prison for taking bribes from Russia, and they have threatened to abolish devolution if they were to take power in the UK.

Although Reform UK have attracted the support of people fed up with all political parties, it's clear from what they say and do (particularly in local councils they now run in England) that they want to make life more difficult for working people and public services.

It's important that our work colleagues, friends and family know where Reform UK stand on austerity, public services, workers' rights and terms and conditions. Here are some key facts you can raise when talking about the threat Reform UK pose.

### **Since taking over 10 English councils in the May 2025 elections Reform UK have:**

- Threatened to cut 2,000 jobs at Derbyshire Council
- Introduced Elon Musk style DOGE units at numerous councils – to make 'efficiencies'
- Reneged on their promise to reduce taxes – with many Reform councils looking to increase council tax by 5% (the maximum allowed)
- Said they would cut benefits and deregulate the economy, with Nigel Farage also saying the minimum wage is too high for young workers
- Called for worrying changes to public sector pensions – including the Local Government Pension Scheme

- Continued to oppose the Employment Rights Bill (the main piece of government legislation to improve workers' rights – e.g. banning exploitative zero hours contracts, introducing rights to sick pay and paternity pay from day one)
- Set out their opposition to clean energy, putting tens of thousands of green jobs at risk
- Been clear (through their leader Nigel Farage) that they oppose the NHS and favour a US style system funded through private insurance.

These are just a few examples of Reform's harmful actions and words directed at core UNISON and wider trade union movement interests.

The party also have many other policies that are diametrically opposed to our union's values and policies – including on immigration and climate change – that some activists may want to highlight when talking about the Reform UK threat.

More key facts and discussion guides will be shared with members of the tackling Reform UK network.

Sign up here: [unison.org.uk/take-action-for-public-services](https://unison.org.uk/take-action-for-public-services).

## What do UNISON members think?

Members trust their union. They'll listen to you – particularly if you're talking about issues, like those above, that relate to the world of work, trade union membership, devolution and public services.

Recent polling of UNISON members shows they trust their union more than MPs, the BBC, newspapers and political commentators. The polling also shows that while some members are considering voting for Reform UK, it's something they would do reluctantly – as a protest. Close to half would vote tactically to keep Reform UK out of power.

While Reform UK is a worrying threat to all UNISON stands for, there are clear opportunities to reduce their support. Let's use these Senedd elections to make sure members know who they really are, and weaken their influence over the UK. Thanks so much for taking part.

