



guide

to

Campaigning





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Campaigning – a UNISON priority

UNISON is a campaigning union and campaigning is one of our priorities. Campaigns increase the visibility of UNISON in the workplace and the wider community and improve perceptions amongst members and non-members. The benefits of running campaigns are:

- They increase understanding in the workplace about what the union does
- They demonstrate that the union acts on members' concerns
- They create opportunities for members to get active
- They build a sense of collectivism amongst members
- They demonstrate to members that working together can change things.

What is campaigning?

Campaigning is about achieving change. When you campaign you are trying to persuade someone to do something, to take a particular course of action in relation to something. You are also trying to change a person's attitude or opinion about something to make it easier to get action taken.

This means that when you campaign you need to be clear about:

- What you want done
- Why it needs to be done
- Who you want to do it

Campaigning is more than organising clever publicity stunts.

Campaigning means having a clear aim or purpose, knowing what change you want to achieve and what is required to bring that change about. If you have no aim, you have no campaign.

What distinguishes campaigning from other activities is that when you campaign you are trying to persuade people to take action by using the power of:

- information
- argument
- publicity.

Campaigning also means that you need to be clear about:

- what message you want to get across
- the ways you can use to get this message across.

Campaigning therefore requires:

- Planning—to work out the campaign's aims and what needs to be done by whom.
- Organisation—to be able to do the right things at the right time to help achieve the campaign's aims.
- Resources—the people, time, information, facilities, equipment and money to support your campaign.
- Evaluation—have you achieved your aims? What worked well, what worked less well? What lessons have you learnt for next time?

Planning your campaign

Set up a planning team

Campaigns don't emerge out of thin air. Nor do they exist by head office decree. Campaigns can only take place if groups of committed individuals come together to plan and achieve change. The branch is a good focus for this.

One person alone cannot plan a campaign. What is needed is a planning team to share the work and run the campaign, and branches are in a good position to set up such a team. The branch secretary or workplace convenor know where to find information and have a network of contacts. They will also be familiar with the stewards and activists and their respective skills and strengths.

Other members of the team should be workplace reps or stewards, particularly those from workplaces which may be campaign targets or important sources of support. Remember that your campaign should be open to all UNISON activists, so stewards and active members should be part of your team whenever possible. It is also a good idea to include communications and publicity experts and branch admin staff where possible as they often have detailed awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of a campaign plan.

Don't make your planning team too big. Six to eight committed people is the maximum you need, otherwise you will just be setting up an unwieldy committee. If you have lots of people wanting to get involved then you may be able to set up several campaign teams, each responsible for running a different campaign or part of a larger campaign. In this case you may need to have some sort of co-ordinating committee at branch level.

Attendance at branch meetings should not be a condition of being a member of a campaign team. An invitation to a steward or rep active in their workplace to join a campaign can be a way of drawing them into the broader union organisation.

You need to ask yourself:

- What do we want?
- Can we achieve it?
- How will we measure our achievement?
- When do we want it by?
- Is this a realistic expectation?

A useful way of answering these questions is to set yourself '**SMART**' objectives.

Specific defines a clear, precise outcome, not a vague, general intention

Measurable should result in clear, noticeable change

Achievable should be possible for people to do it

Realistic should have the commitment and resources to see it through

Timed should have a completion date built in.

If you have **SMART** objectives you will be able to monitor whether your campaign is successful according to whether you are achieving your objectives.

Choosing a campaign issue – widely & deeply felt and winnable & visible

Choosing the right issue is one of the most important parts of campaigning – the campaign issue needs to be relevant to a significant number of workers either across the whole of the workplace or in particular areas. Choosing the right issues means identifying the ones that will connect with members and increase the chance of overcoming apathy or fear and of members getting involved.

A good way to think about issues is to ask the following questions.

WIDELY FELT – Does the issue affect enough of the workers across the whole workplace?

DEEPLY FELT – Are the workers affected sufficiently angry or concerned about the issue to want to do something about it?

WINNABLE – Is there a realistic chance of achieving something in relation to the issue?

VISIBLE – Will taking on the issue raise the profile of UNISON in the workplace?

Identifying campaign issues could involve listening to members in the workplace in either one-to-one meetings or by using surveys.

If the issue does not arise from a particular workplace, you could:

- Choose an issue identified by UNISON nationally for your campaign.
- Choose an issue identified by another organisation and supported by UNISON nationally, such as the TUC
- Use a new piece of legislation.
- Choose an issue already identified by the branch as a priority.

Decide the form the campaign will take

Once you have considered all your options in detail, you will be able to make an informed decision about what sort of campaign you wish to run. You may decide to choose several of the options and use them at different stages.

Here are some points to consider:

- Your **approach**—should be positive and constructive.
- Your **arguments**—should be thoroughly researched, factually correct and convincing.
- Your **presentation**—should be clear, well thought out, free of spelling mistakes and other inaccuracies. It should be factual, avoid personal attacks and written in language that can be easily understood by the people you want to read it.
- Your **tactics**—should be consistent with and relevant to the campaign. They should further the campaign objectives and should not alienate the people you are trying to persuade. They should be non-violent and they should be lawful.
- Your **campaign base**—should be as broad as possible and include other interested groups who can add to your resources and influence.

Draw up a plan of action – campaign planning

Every campaign needs a detailed, flexible plan that everyone involved agrees to implement in a structured way. To ensure maximum buy-in from everyone involved in the campaign the plan should, where possible, be devised and reviewed by the whole campaign team. When developing a plan, bear in mind the “real-life” test – the plan needs to be realistic, achievable and informed by the “real-life” situation on the ground. The chart below shows critical elements in the campaign plan.

Element	Action
Timeline	<i>Establish a campaign calendar</i>
	<i>Set the pace for the campaign</i>
Potential proactive and reactive strategies	<i>Know the campaign’s strengths and weaknesses</i>
	<i>Consider whether you need to broaden the campaign</i>
	<i>Ask whether you need a media strategy</i>
Resources & Budget	<i>Anticipate the unexpected and consider potential impact upon the campaign</i>
	<i>You should also work out what resources you will need and how you are going to get hold of them</i>
Benchmarks/ Milestones	<i>Identify clear benchmarks to assess progress particularly when it comes to deciding an end point for the campaign</i>

Obviously you will want to have a clear plan of action. You should already have worked out how long the campaign is going to take so you now need to draw up a timetable for action.

Look at all your campaign ideas and plan how and when you will use them over the period. Don’t use all your ideas in one go. You will want to keep up the campaign momentum, so you should keep some

of your best ideas for later in the campaign.

You should also work out what resources you will need and how you are going to get hold of them. If you need to book rooms or equipment make sure that you don't leave it to the last minute or you could find that someone else has already reserved them.

If you need to order supplies of leaflets from UNISON's Communications Department or design and print your own, give yourselves plenty of time (doing your own can take a lot longer than you think).

Finally, you should agree who is doing what and make sure that everyone understands what their responsibilities are and when they have to do things. An action checklist will be invaluable for this. You should ensure that it is filled in and that it is checked regularly.

Keep everybody informed

Information and publicity are the lifeblood of campaigning. People working on your campaign need to be kept in touch with what is happening. You can ensure this by having regular campaign meetings (but not at the expense of campaign activities) or by producing a regular or as-and-when campaign newsletter. Telephone trees are also a quick way of passing on information.

You also need to let your campaign audience know what is happening. Newsletters can be circulated beyond the circle of campaign workers. Union noticeboards can be used in the workplace. E-mails distribution lists should be used as well as the branch website where this exists. You could use a campaign event, such as a public meeting, to report progress. You might be able to get stories in the local press or on TV. Don't forget social networking sites. Why not do a blog?

It is particularly important to let people know about any campaign successes you have had. This keeps up the morale of the members working on the campaign and lets your audience know what you have achieved.

Review the action plan

To be absolutely sure that everything is going to plan, you should review the action plan at regular intervals. You should ask:

- Are we on target?
- Do we have sufficient resources?
- Are our objectives still achievable?
- Are any changes needed?

Know when to stop

Some campaigns may be short and sweet. Some may run for a long time, perhaps with periods of more intense activity broken up by more inactive periods while you regroup, replan and revitalise yourself for the next phase. There should be a time in any campaign, however, when you decide to call a halt because:

- You have achieved your campaign aims, or
- You have achieved at least enough of your campaign aims to claim some success, or
- When it is obvious your campaign is going nowhere and you would be better expending your energies on other campaigns or activities.

Whatever you decide it is important to let everybody who is involved in the campaign know what is happening. You should also make sure that you thank everybody who has helped in the campaign. Not only is this a courteous thing to do, but you may also want their help in future campaigns.

If your campaign has been successful make sure you publicise this, perhaps with a celebratory event.

It is very unlikely that you will have achieved nothing out of a campaign. Moving things forward can be a slow process. Rome was not built in a day. It is important to recognise what successes you have had, even if they fall short of your original objectives.

This is important for your own morale and that of other activists or

members. For example, your goal may have been to get everyone trained. But after a lot of effort, what you have finally achieved is an agreement to a meeting to discuss training with management. This is a success, a step in the right direction. It would not have happened without the union, so make sure people know this.

Evaluate the campaign

When the campaign is over, you should meet to evaluate it. There will be useful lessons for any future campaigns you may wish to plan.

You will need to consider:

- Was the campaign a success?
- Did we achieve all our objectives?
- What worked well?
- What mistakes did we make?
- What could we have done better?
- What lessons have we learned?

Ideas for campaigning activities

Remember that the branch can play a key role in organising and coordinating workplace campaigns. It can provide information and resources and can help smaller workplace groups to come together to pool ideas and resources and campaign together.

Your campaign activities will depend on the resources available in your branch and the strength of your organisation. You don't have to be over-ambitious. Small-scale activities which go well will be more effective than big plans that don't work out. If you are a very small branch a poster campaign may be all you can aim for but, done imaginatively with eye-catching posters, it could generate a lot of interest and support.

Remember, the political parties spend millions of pounds on poster campaigns in the run-up to a general election, so they must believe that this is an effective way to get their message across.

If you are campaigning in the workplace you will need the support of your members and will want to attract the support of non-members. So an important part of your campaign will be about raising colleagues' awareness and keeping them involved and informed.

Remember that the aim of the campaign is to get something changed and improved. At the end of the campaign you want someone to have taken action.

Newsletters, leaflets, posters, stickers

An effective way to start to raise awareness of an issue and get people interested is to distribute materials carrying your campaign message. These can range from simple stickers and posters to leaflets which explain the issues in more detail or special newsletters with information about the issues and details of other campaign activities.

If your campaign is based on a national campaign being run by UNISON, you will have the advantage of ready-made campaign materials produced by the union which you can order in bulk from the Communications Unit. The same will probably apply if you are participating in some other national level campaign, such as those run by the TUC.

If your campaign is about more local issues you may have to produce your own materials or use a mixture of your own specific materials and more general literature available from the union.

You should be aware that not everyone reads leaflets that are just handed to them and that even if they do they can soon forget the contents. So you should aim to link the literature campaign to a particular event or follow it up with some other activities to keep people's interest.

Simply going round talking to people helps. If your resources do not extend to large events, you should at least make sure that your literature tells people what action they can take to support your campaign.

A survey of UNISON branches showed that posters were the most frequently used campaign tools. It is important to remember, however, that in order to be really effective the posters should be linked to a specific campaign event or theme and that poster displays should be attractive and changed regularly, not left on notice boards to become faded, tattered and ignored.

Website / Emails / Social Networking Sites / Distribution Lists

All UNISON branches use emails to communicate with members. Ensure that everyone involved in the campaign provides you with an email address. For campaigns against your employer it's also useful to obtain personal email addresses in case the employer restricts the use of work-based email facilities.

If the branch has a website, ensure that details of the campaign, including how to get involved feature prominently on the home page. It's also useful to make all the campaign material available to download.

The campaign should also make use of social networking sites, such as Facebook which members and the wider public can join as part of the campaign.

Meetings, videos and Powerpoint Presentations

Another way to raise awareness is to hold a special meeting. The meetings might be branch meetings or open meetings to which non-members are also invited.

The speaker could be someone from within the union, including someone from another branch or someone from an outside organisation.

You could also show a video, or a PowerPoint presentation, as an event in itself or as part of the special meeting.

Ensure that campaign material as well as UNISON application forms are available at all meetings.

Seminars, workshops

If you are very well organised you could run a more formal seminar with platform speakers and workshop sessions at which participants can discuss specific aspects of the issue in smaller, informal groups.

You should also make sure that you arrange for someone to lead each of the workshops. They don't have to be outside experts but they should have some knowledge of the subject and be able to keep the workshop to its task and ensure that everyone has an equal chance to join in the discussion. Some UNISON activists have been trained as lay tutors who maybe able to help. Your regional educational officer can help you contact them.

Exhibitions

An exhibition is a good way to attract people's attention and raise awareness.

If you have access to a set of plain display boards you may be able to design and mount your own exhibition, using UNISON posters and other materials. Don't be tempted to put too much on the boards. Try to keep to a single theme. A simple, bold display is more eye-catching than a lot of cluttered leaflets that people can't read easily. You should save those for the stall.

Remember that UNISON's national magazine for activists, *In Focus* always contains posters on topical subjects as its centre pages.

Portable pull up display boards can be purchased from Blue Creation Tel: 01733 563057. These are reasonably cheap and branches have the option of changing the inserts once the campaign comes to an end.

Surveys

A survey is a very good way to raise awareness and to obtain evidence to strengthen your case.

The survey does not need to be complicated, in fact the shorter and simpler the survey form is, the more likely people are to fill it in.

You could distribute the survey as a follow up to a poster or leaflet campaign or a meeting, once people have had an opportunity to read about or listen to the issues. If you can distribute it in person you will also have the chance to talk briefly to people about the issues.

You should include an explanatory letter with the survey form, explaining the purpose of the survey, what you will do with the results, how to fill it in, where to return it and thanking people for taking time to complete it. You might also consider including a reply-paid envelope.

You will also need to decide whether you want people to provide their names or whether the forms will be anonymous. In many circumstances people will be reluctant to give their names in case the information they give can be used against them. If people are not required to give their names, say so, and emphasise that the information will be kept completely confidential. It is the overall results that you will use to build a case to present to management.

Make sure that you keep people informed of what you are doing and of your progress with management. If you don't, they are unlikely to want to cooperate with future surveys.

Recruiting new members

Campaigning gives you a chance to recruit new UNISON members. Your campaigning activities will make you visible in the workplace. Carry recruitment leaflets around with you and ask non-members about any problems they may have. You should also make sure that recruitment leaflets (and membership application forms) are available at any stand, stall or exhibition you organise as part of your campaigning. Why not pin a few blank ones on your noticeboards?

Campaigning in the community

Raising public awareness

Raising public awareness of an issue will help you get wider support for your campaign and so help you to achieve your campaign objectives. It will also raise UNISON's profile in the community. This will in turn strengthen your own members' support for the campaign and help attract new members.

The branch has an important part to play in local campaigns. Part of its function is to develop and maintain contacts in the community and also to develop and maintain contacts between workplace groups and other local branches.

The region should also be involved in campaigns which extend into the local area. If not, you can propose they do so, or ask them to support your activities in the community.

There are various ways in which you can raise public awareness and obtain further support. Many activities will be similar to those that you run in the workplace except that they have a wider audience. They could include:

- Putting on an exhibition, for example in the local library.
- Having a street stall.
- Having a stand at a local event such as a May Day rally or summer fair.
- Handing out leaflets stickers or balloons.
- Getting people to sign a petition.
- Organising a public meeting with a keynote speaker.
- Participating in local seminars and other events, for example by providing speakers, by having an information stand or by sending delegates who will make a contribution from the floor.
- Providing speakers to local groups.

- Providing speakers to schools and colleges.
- Holding some form of demonstration or visual stunt.
- Publicising your activities in the local media by issuing a press release.
- Writing letters to the local newspapers.
- Contact local radio station phone-in programmes.

Hold a sponsored event or get your message printed on T-shirts, caps, badges, mugs or pens which you can sell to supporters—it can all help publicise your campaign as well as raise funds for further activities.

A public event can also provide an opportunity to involve other campaigning groups and local or national celebrities, as well as being a good story for the local media.

Working with other groups and organisations

You may be able to join forces with other groups or organisations. It is a very good idea to maintain records of these groups along with information about the ways in which they can be useful. You can contact other trade unions in your area either through workplace contacts or through your local trades council. Your UNISON regional office will be able to give you the name of the trades council secretary.

Professional groups

You can also get your message across to the community through professional groups. There may be a whole range in your area which organise meetings and events for their members and are on the look out for outside speakers.

Getting publicity for your campaign

If you want the public to learn about your campaign, the facts behind it and the events taking place, you will need to publicise these through the media. For most branch campaigns you will use the local rather

than the national media. This means regional newspapers, local newspapers and free newspapers, local radio (BBC and independent) and local TV (BBC and independent). Local newspapers are the most likely to cover your story, local radio next and local TV the least likely. It is important to remember that journalists are just ordinary people trying to do a job. They are usually working within constraints and structures over which they have little or no control. This means that they cannot guarantee that a particular story will appear or that it will appear unaltered, since that is the decision of the sub-editors or producers to whom the story is passed.

It is also important to remember that journalists work to deadlines, some of which are very tight, so you should find out the relevant deadlines and make sure that you submit stories in good time to meet them.

UNISON's Communications Unit can give you advice on getting publicity for your campaign as can the North West Regional Communications and Media team. If you are going to be dealing with the media on a regular basis you should try and go on a media training course. This will help you acquire the necessary skills and confidence and also give you advice on not being caught out by journalists trying to put words in your mouth etc.

Finding contacts

You will need to find out what local media there are in your area; you may be surprised how many there are. Your branch communications, publicity or other officers may already have a network of media contacts. If not, the local library is a good place to start. It will usually keep copies of the local newspapers. Don't ignore the free newspapers—they are often distributed very widely throughout the locality.

You should list the addresses and phone and fax numbers for the different papers and radio and TV stations. It is always best to find out the names of contact journalists for each so that you can start to build up working relationships with some of the more helpful journalists. You could also see whether there is a representative from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) on the local trades council who

could give you some advice about people to contact. Ask if someone from the UNISON Communications Unit can give you advice and help. Alternatively you might find a local NUJ member who is willing to help.

Your media strategy

If you are planning an extensive campaign, you could speak to one of your media contacts before the campaign starts to give them advance notice and to discuss the best way to get stories in. Remember that radio and TV will want more than a written press release and that plenty of notice has to be given if you want a camera crew to be present.

Your media strategy should be aimed at achieving maximum public attention and support for your campaign. You will need to consider:

- What you can achieve by media coverage.
- Who you will contact.
- How you will contact them.
- What message you want to get across.
- The sorts of events that will attract a lot of publicity.
- When to release the story.
- How to follow it up.
- Who will deal with subsequent media interest.
- What briefing they will need.

News releases

The most useful way that you can get your message across is by issuing a news or press release. Producing a news release that is going to attract an editor's attention requires care and effort.

News releases can be used to:

- Give notice of an event.
- Announce a new campaign.
- Provide progress reports on campaigns.
- Provide a report of a meeting.
- Provide a report of what action workers have decided to take.
- Give advance notice of a speech and its contents.

- Attach a copy of a letter you have written, say to your local MP
- Provide background information.

The advantages of using news releases are that you decide the content and the emphasis of the story and since they represent a written record they are less likely to be changed.

You should aim for as wide a readership as possible. Send your press release to the news editors or to your named contacts in all the relevant organisations. It is often helpful to follow this up with a phone call. You can send news releases to local radio and TV also but remember that they may require an interview or visual news too.

Don't forget to send a copy to UNISON

Don't forget to send a copy to UNISON regional office or headquarters and to UNISON Focus. The union is always keen to know what branches are doing so that we can publicise your successes in union publications and pass on ideas to other members for their campaigns. The media want stories about things that are happening, not just opinions, so your story must be newsworthy.

The local media are particularly keen to have stories with a local angle so you should always try to use local facts and figures or local people who are willing for their story to be used (make sure you have their written consent to use their story and if in doubt check with the regional office as well).

The media also need to have an event to hang a story on, so you could think about creating an event to make the news. An event that provides visual impact and the opportunity for a good photograph is always useful.

Sometimes you may need to get a story in quickly in which case you will have to contact journalists by telephone. When telephoning you should:

- Ask to speak to the person covering the news area you are dealing with such as health, employment issues.

- Make a note of the person to whom you are speaking for future reference.
- Give your name, organisation, name of campaign and concise details of the story.
- Keep a note of the conversation (time, date, who said what, arrangements for future contact etc).

Challenging bad reporting

Inaccuracies in reports occur for all kinds of reasons and are usually genuine mistakes rather than a conspiracy. However, if reporting is seriously biased or inaccurate this should be challenged straight away. If the report was clearly one-sided you should write to the editor and ask for a right of reply. If the report was inaccurate you should phone the reporter or news editor and list all the mistakes and omissions calmly and firmly, or write to the editor listing all the mistakes and omissions.

Always be absolutely sure of your facts before you complain.

Generating debate

You can get direct access to local media and use this to generate a public debate about the issues that concern you. Your main options are:

- Newspapers—letters page, open column
- Radio—phone-ins, audience reply programmes
- TV—audience participation such as in current affairs programmes, access slots

Branches will normally find it easiest to use newspapers and radio phone-ins.

Writing to the newspaper

You can take the opportunity to write letters to the newspapers throughout the campaign. If your press release has not been used you could turn it into a letter and try to get your story in that way. You can use the letters page to respond to all kinds of stories.

Some newspapers have a special column which can be used by local organisations etc to explain what they do or discuss a particular issue. You could look through your local papers to see if they have this sort of opportunity and phone them up to find out how it works and whether you could contribute a column.

On-line Comments

Many newspapers now have on-line editions where the public can respond to each story. Comments can be left which either support the campaign or rebut the comments made by the employer or other members of the public. Remember that on-line comments are moderated by the newspaper and will be removed if deemed offensive or even libellous.

Radio phone-ins

Phone-in programmes are quite common on local radio and provide another useful means of getting your message across. Some will be general phone-ins, others will have a specific theme.

If it is a general phone-in it is a good idea to respond to something that has been in the news, either locally or nationally and to have a number of people ready to phone in with different points to make about the issue. Make sure that you are not over-rehearsed though or it will appear obviously pre-planned. Make sure that you have got plenty of people ready to phone in if your own campaign event is in the news.

If the phone-in is on a particular theme, you will need to check in advance. Listen out for trailers for forthcoming programmes. These programmes usually start with someone being interviewed on a particular topic and then they take calls from listeners. If you are phoning in to a programme that is on a specific topic, do stress any experience or special knowledge that you have that qualifies you to make an informed contribution.

You may be able to arrange for a UNISON regional official to be interviewed about your campaign in which case you will want to have people ready to phone in with friendly questions. On the other

hand if the programme guest is from the employers' side you can get people to phone in with difficult questions.

And a final word of warning—turn the radio off or right down when you are phoning in. If there is a radio on in the same room it will cause a terrible howling and they may cut you off.

Lobbying decision makers

Lobbying means putting your case directly to policy and decision makers in order to inform them and get them to do something. So you need to find out who is responsible for making the decisions, when a particular decision is going to be taken and where you will find the people you want to lobby.

The most usual people to lobby are councillors, MPs and MEPs, and other professionals.

Remember that it can be just as important to lobby someone in order to demonstrate your support for something. While we need to make our voice heard about proposals or decisions that we believe are wrong or harmful, we often run the risk of losing those things we do want because we take them for granted and forget to express our support for them in as strong a voice.

Lobbying your MP

The reason for lobbying your MP is in order to get them to take some action, so you need to understand exactly what MPs can do before you decide whether lobbying your MP is appropriate.

The sorts of things that MPs can do are:

- Write to a Minister and get a personal reply.
- Ask a written or an oral parliamentary question.
- Put down an Early Day Motion.
- Present a Private Member's Bill.
- Present a Ten Minute Rule Bill.
- Sponsor or speak in a parliamentary debate.

Most of these are just devices for drawing attention to an issue but they can be useful if you want to get a subject aired in Parliament and they may lead to something more tangible.

It is also helpful to find out as much as you can about your MP and their particular interests so you have some idea of the support you are likely to get and how to approach them. Are they in government or opposition? Do they hold any senior or junior office? What committees are they on? Are they a member of any all-party group? You can find out this information from one or more of the published guides to Members of Parliament, for example the Vacher guide, which should be available in your local library. Details of MPs can also be found on the Parliament website - <http://www.parliament.uk>

You will have to decide the best way to lobby your MP—how to contact them, where to contact them and in what capacity. You will also have to decide whether it is best to lobby them as individual constituents or as a campaign group or both. You could:

- Write to them at their constituency.
- Write to them at the House of Commons.
- Visit them at their constituency surgery (an appointment is advisable).
- Visit them at the House of Commons (always make an appointment first).
- Join a mass lobby being organised nationally.
- Invite them to a meeting.

MPs do take notice of letters, especially individual letters from their constituents. And the more they get, the more likely they are to take notice. You can write to them at the House of Commons but a letter to them at their local office will reinforce the fact that you are a constituent. Your letter should ask the MP to do something specific so that they are obliged to reply.

If you go to meet the MP make sure that you are all agreed on the line you are going to take and that you are clear what you are asking the MP to do. Have a simple written briefing for the MP together with

any supporting evidence. Keep a record of what was said and write to the MP afterwards confirming what they agreed to do. Don't forget to follow them up if you don't hear anything within a reasonable time. You could issue a news release about your meeting but it is only courteous to let the MP know that you are going to do this or you may prejudice any support they may have promised you.

Lobbying your MEP

It may be useful to lobby your MEP in some circumstances. MEPs are less likely to hold a local surgery because their constituency is too large. However, they will have a local office and you could make an appointment to meet them there. To find out who your MEP is and where to write to them, contact your local council or visit: <http://www.europarl.org.uk/section/your-meps/your-meps>

Lobbying professionals

There are various groups of professionals that you might wish to approach as part of a campaign. Lobbying a local organisation can be less confrontational than lobbying individuals and more productive than lobbying their national body. The first step is to identify your targets and then to decide what message you want to get across to them. You should try to:

- Gain their understanding of and sympathy for the issues.
- Propose action that they can take as part of their daily professional lives.
- Work with rather than against them.

Lobbying your trades council

A good way of spreading your campaign and obtaining wider support for it is to get the support of your local trades council. Trades councils are made up of representatives of different trade unions in a geographical area. For some campaigns, say those trying to stop cuts to or closures of local services the members of other unions' branches could be useful allies. Normally support is obtained by putting a motion to the normal meetings of the trades council.

Presentation skills

This section sets out some basic advice on getting your presentation right. It covers

- writing a news/press release
- writing a letter
- writing a leaflet or newsletter
- dealing with journalists' enquiries
- preparing for an interview.

Remember that the UNISON Communications Unit is also able to help you with more detailed advice and guidance on preparing your campaign and publicity materials.

Writing a news release

As already explained, a news release is the most useful way to get your story to journalists. However, to stand any chance of it being used, it must be presented properly.

Content

The basic rule for any news release is that it must contain 'the five Ws'— that is What, Who, Where, When and Why. It should also get these in at the very beginning. So the first paragraph of your news release should state, preferably in the first sentence,

- what is happening
- who is doing it
- where it is happening
- when it is happening.

It should then state

- why it is happening.

The following paragraphs of the news release should then go on to set out more details of the Ws. The story should be presented in a logical order and should concentrate on the facts.

If you want to include an opinion this should preferably be in the form of a quote from a key figure in your campaign. If you can include a quote from a big name, so much the better.

Put the information in the order of its importance as editors cut from the bottom of the news release upwards if they can't use it all.

Your news release should have a short and snappy headline, probably based on your first sentence. Try to make sure it involves people doing something, but don't try and compete with the popular tabloids. You're not looking for something witty or outrageous—just something that will capture the journalist's attention.

Style

The style in which you write the news release is very important. You should aim to

- Use short sentences—no more than 25 to 30 words.
- Use vigorous, assertive language rather than a bland style.
- Use positive rather than negative statements.
- Use language that is free from jargon or abbreviations that are meaningless to anyone outside the trade union movement (and to many within it)—such as NEC, SOG,
- Use plain words with no padding.
- Use direct quotes rather than indirect quotes so that your story comes alive.

Format

You should pay careful attention to the format of your news release, which should be clear and neatly laid out. The most important things to remember are:

- use headed notepaper
- use a PC word processor or typewriter and type neatly and accurately
- make sure it says News Release at the top
- put the date on it
- put the time and date of any embargo at the top in capitals

- give it a headline
- use double spacing
- allow wide margins
- keep to one side of A4 paper if possible, two sides at the most
- type/print on one side of the paper only
- don't split a sentence over two pages
- use a key word from the headline at the start of a new page
- number the pages
- always include a contact name and telephone number
- add a note to editors if you want to give background information or details of a photo opportunity
- if there is more than one page put more follows, more or mf at the bottom of the page
- put end at the bottom of the last page
- use a staple not a paperclip to attach pages.

Writing a letter

A well written letter should

- be correctly addressed and dated
- use the name, title and address of the person you are writing to
- be as short as possible
- be maximum one page long
- be easy to understand
- say why you are writing the letter
- say what you want to say in a logical order
- use a new paragraph for each new point
- be free from mistakes
- Where possible be typed not hand written.

Your letter should also state clearly who you are. Remember to identify yourself as a UNISON member and give your position in the union, for example branch health and safety officer. Say also which branch or workplace you represent. Remember to sign the letter. If possible get several people to sign it (making sure they are all clearly identified). This increases the impact of the letter.

If you are organising a letter writing campaign you may be able to

use a model or draft letter provided as part of the materials of a wider campaign. Remember you may need to rewrite the model letter to make it more suitable for your own use, for example by adding in some local references.

You should also encourage people to rewrite the letter themselves, perhaps adding in some personal comments from their own experience. They should also follow the tips for good letter writing set out above.

Writing a leaflet or newsletter

Although UNISON, the TUC and other organisations produce newsletters and leaflets to back up specific campaigns, which you will be able to obtain in bulk for your local campaigns, there will be occasions when you want to produce your own campaign materials or to produce leaflets and newsletters to keep members informed of the campaign's progress. This is relatively straightforward to do and can be a very effective way of reaching people.

The branch or region will almost certainly have the latest software which you can use to produce your materials. Some of your members may have particular design, drawing or cartoon skills that they are only too pleased to put to good use to help you. Even if you don't have the latest technology you can still produce effective materials using a typewriter, or stencils, scissors and paste, and a photocopier.

You can also use material on UNISON's national web site, produced by the Communications Unit. They can save you a lot of time and ensure that your leaflet or newsletter looks professional.

If you are producing a leaflet or newsletter you will need to consider:

- Who it is aimed at.
- What message you want to put across.
- How frequently you want to issue the newsletter.
- The title, style and format you are going to use—you will want to stick to it for subsequent issues for consistency.
- How many copies—is it for members only or a wider readership?

- How you will get it printed.
- What it will cost.

Have a look at some examples of existing newsletters and leaflets and decide which you think are the most attractive and readable and why. Then experiment with some designs yourself. Remember the following points about good design:

- Make it look inviting—people won't read it automatically.
- Make the layout clear and eye-catching.
- Choose a good column width—if it is A4, two columns look best.
- Use punchy headlines.
- Break the text up into small chunks.
- Don't make it too wordy—have plenty of space, illustrations, or sub-headings.
- Don't make it too cluttered—avoid using lots of different styles or typefaces at once.

The text is what your audience will look at last, so write it last after you have decided on the layout and fit it in. The rules about the text are similar to those for a news release:

- use the five Ws—who, what, where, when, why
- put the most important information at the beginning
- use short sentences
- write in a logical order
- use simple language but make it vigorous and active
- be positive
- avoid jargon, abbreviations and padding
- use quotes to add human interest
- check it for accuracy, spelling and grammar.

Remember that there's a limit to the amount of information people can take in at one time. So keep to a few key points, for example:

- what's wrong
- what should be done
- how people can help
- a call to action
- a contact address and telephone number for more information.

Dealing with journalists' enquiries

If you are approached by a journalist for a story you need to deal with the situation carefully and confidently. You should:

- Ask yourself whether you are the best person to comment—if there is someone better qualified than you, put the journalist in touch with them.
- Take your time—find out what the journalist wants to know and why. What sort of item it is?
- Check with the journalist if there are any deadlines that need to be met.
- Don't answer off the cuff or you will just waffle—say you will call the journalist back.
- Check all the facts and work out what you want to say—then ring the journalist back with a well thought out response.
- Always ring back if you have promised to do so—if you don't the journalist will phone you again anyway and will probably be annoyed and less sympathetic, or worse, may never phone again.
- Don't make off the record statements.
- Say what you want to say and no more—don't be caught off guard by rambling, apparently chatty interviews, and don't let the journalist put words in your mouth by using questions like, 'wouldn't you agree that..?'
- If in doubt, contact UNISON's press office at Mabledon Place, or ask your region for support and advice.

Preparing for an interview

A successful radio or TV interview depends as much on your preparation beforehand as your performance at the time. Most people can perform quite adequately but the ones who come out best are those who have prepared for the questions and know what message they want to get across.

If you are invited to take part in an interview you need to find out:

- what the programme is
- who is doing the interview

- what do they want to talk about
- the programme's angle
- how long it will be
- will it be live or recorded
- will it be on the telephone
- will it be from a remote studio
- will it be face to face on location
- will it be in the studio
- will there be other contributors, if so, who
- will it be edited
- will the audience be local or national.

You then need to consider:

- what you will get out of it
- what audience you want to reach
- whether it is worth doing
- whether you are the best person to do it.

Planning

Before you do the interview you should plan carefully. If you have the opportunity, listen to or watch the programme so that you get some idea of its usual style and format. Don't think you can do the interview off the cuff but don't write out or memorise a whole speech either.

Decide on the main points that you want to get across. Select between three and five points depending on the length of the interview and make sure you learn all the facts that support those points. Think about how best to make the points—you should aim to be lively, direct and relevant. Have some good examples ready to illustrate your points.

Try to anticipate the questions you will be asked and be prepared for hostile or leading questions. Think of the question you would least like to be asked and have an answer ready for it.

Before the interview

Make sure you arrive in plenty of time—allow at least 10 minutes to

prepare and collect yourself. Wear something that you feel comfortable in.

Don't drink alcohol beforehand even if it is offered to you. If your throat feels dry because you are nervous take a few sips of water.

Try to relax—deep breathing helps. Check with the interviewer how they are going to introduce you and ask what the first question will be so that you are prepared and can get off to a good start. Check once again how long the interview will be so that you can plan to end well too.

During the interview

Don't let yourself be rushed, but avoid long pauses as well or you will sound evasive or unsure of your facts. Make a good start and try to get your main point in right at the beginning. This will be easier if you checked beforehand what the first question would be.

Keep your answers short and to the point. Speak clearly in everyday language and avoid jargon or technical terms that people will not understand. If the subject is a complex one, make sure that you explain it in a simple way. Try to sound assertive, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and lively.

Don't give yes or no answers—follow up your reply with the points you want to get over. Make sure that you work all your points into the interview. You don't have to answer an irrelevant question—just say something like: 'I think the important issue here is...' and say what you want to say. Challenge any inaccurate statements politely but firmly. And finally, keep your eye on the time and try to go out on strong note.

Tips for radio interview

You can get away with having some short notes or key words on a notepad or cards, but avoid papers that rustle and don't read from your notes or you will sound stilted.

If you are not in a studio (radio interviews are often done over the phone) make sure that the interview is in a quiet place away from extraneous noises and give instructions that you are not to be disturbed.

Tips for TV interviews

On TV the way you look does matter. Choose neat, sober clothes that won't distract viewers from what you have to say or undermine your credibility.

Sit still but not rigid, slightly forward in your chair and look the interviewer in the eye. Look alert and attentive and don't fidget. Try to keep hand movements to a minimum when you are making a point. Remember that the camera could be on you at any time, not just when you are speaking.

Don't keep referring to notes. You could have a pad with some key words on the table in front of you or on your lap but you should only look at them discreetly.

Tips for location interviews

If you are being filmed on location, make sure your surroundings are suitable. Avoid noisy or busy locations which will be distracting to viewers or which will cause you to shout to be heard and therefore come across as aggressive. Choose a background that will illustrate the points that you are trying to get across, or else play safe and use a background that will give you authority such as in front of bookshelves or at a (tidy) desk.

Tips for remote studio interviews

If you are asked to do a remote studio interview you will have to listen to questions through an earphone and deliver your answers into a camera. You should treat the camera as if it were a person's face and look at it. React with your face to the interviewer's questions and when answering imagine that you are next to them in person. If you are taking part in a discussion use the same techniques that you would in a normal studio— cut in and speak to people when you want to. Then they can't ignore you just because you are not present with them.

How to publish and stay within the law

When you plan to publish your branch newsheet or a leaflet during a dispute, falling foul of the law is generally the last thing on your mind. But legal cases can be costly (even if you win) so it is worth avoiding any risk. This article covers libel and copyright which apply to all forms of publication (from a letter to your local newspaper to the world wide web) and imprints (which apply to most printed material).

Libel

The legal definition of libel is a published (including broadcast) false statement that:

- exposes someone to hatred, ridicule or contempt
- causes them to be shunned or avoided
- lowers them in the estimation of 'right thinking' members of society
- disparages them in their office, profession or trade.

In order to be a libel, the words used must refer to an individual or individuals who can be identified. It does not apply to an organisation or group of people, unless what you write or say can be taken to refer to identifiable individuals in a group (so the smaller the group, the more possible for individuals to be identified).

How libel can occur

A libel is most likely to occur by accident. Anything you publish carries a risk if it includes inaccurate, unclear, ambiguous or unchecked facts which could be taken to reflect badly on an individual or individuals. You can even libel someone you did not know existed. And libel can be simply an innuendo or implication. But even truthful statements carry a risk; if you were sued you would have to be able to prove they were true. And even if you could prove that, could you or your branch afford the cost of a court case? The winning side might still have to pay

thousands of pounds to its own lawyers. So the key to libel is to avoid it in the first place.

How to avoid libel

Take special care when referring to individuals or groups, criticising anyone's behaviour or even making jokes about identifiable people. For example, a hostile reference – however truthful! – to 'management' might be interpreted as a libel on the good name of an identifiable manager.

What you meant to imply is irrelevant. What counts is what 'right thinking' people would think is meant. So before you publish anything, read all the text, including headlines and captions. Ask yourself: 'Could anyone say that this casts doubt on his or her integrity or good name?' If the answer is 'yes', change it. The golden rule is: when in doubt, leave it out.

The same goes, of course, for speeches, radio interviews and so on. And the golden rule here is: think before you speak.

The long arm of the law

A threat of libel action could be very serious. Or it could just be an attempt to silence or put pressure on you. If you receive a solicitor's letter suggesting you have libelled someone, don't reply yourself. A solicitor's letter should only be answered by a solicitor. So consult UNISON's Legal Services Department as a matter of urgency.

Copyright

The Copyright Designs and Patents Act of 1988 says that you should not copy or reproduce or quote extensively from any written, photographic, artistic or similar work, or distribute it, without the permission of the author or creator. To reproduce copyright material, you should ask the permission of the originator, normally through their publisher. You may have to pay for its use. You do not have to seek permission to quote extracts from a published article if it is solely for

the purpose of review or news reporting, but the extracts should be short and must be clearly acknowledged, giving the name of the author and the publication.

Photographs and other illustrations

Do not use a photograph or illustration without the permission of the photographer or illustrator/cartoonist. He or she may ask you to pay a 'reproduction fee' for its use. Most freelance photographers and illustrators are fellow trade unionists. They own the copyright on their work – and they need to make a living, like the rest of us. For example, the copyright on most of the photographs and cartoons used by UNISON in its publications is owned by the people who created them. If UNISON InFocus, say, wants to re-use a photograph (even if it already has a print of it), permission must be sought and a reproduction fee paid. The exceptions are the photographs, illustrations and cartoons in the clipsheets for branch newssheets which the communications department publishes. Copyright on these has already been cleared for your use. This material can be downloaded from UNISON's webs site.

<http://www.unison.org.uk/communicating/members.asp>

You can be sued for breach of copyright, though it is more likely that the copyright owner will simply charge you more if you have used their work without permission. So it pays to ask first! If in doubt on any aspect of copyright, seek advice from UNISON's communications department.

Imprint

Anything you get printed – newssheets, leaflets or posters – should have the name and address of the printer on it (small items like stickers and badges, by convention, do not need to).

Commercial printers will usually add their name and address automatically, but remember to leave room on your design. It is also common practice – and common sense – to include in the imprint the

name and address of the publisher. If you are printing the item yourself (and remember that 'printing' includes publishing by photocopying or duplicating) then the imprint would read 'Published and printed by... UNISON branch', together with your address.

Further information

If you need help on the law relating to publishing, seek advice from UNISON's communications department. Probably the best published guide to the law on publishing is *Essential Law for Journalists* by LC. McNae (published by Butterworths).



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