

# DEMONSTRATIONS AND LOBBIES

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### Preamble

**1.1** This code has been agreed by the National Executive Council in accordance with its responsibilities under Rule D 2.1. The Code covers:

- UNISON members attending demonstrations, lobbies and marches initiated by branches, regions or national level
- UNISON members attending similar activities convened by organisations to which UNISON is affiliated or where explicit UNISON support is given
- UNISON members attending demonstrations at UNISON premises.

**1.2** It must be read and applied in conjunction with the Democracy in UNISON guidelines.

**1.3** The term demonstration in this code includes lobbies of employers and others, marches and similar activities.

### Principles

**2.1** The intention of this Code is not to inhibit membership participation but to ensure that any demonstrations comply with UNISON's Rule Book and its aims and values. These:

- encourage solidarity and effective partnership working between members, activists and UNISON staff
- ensure membership participation in decision-making, proportionality and fair representation
- support campaign activities to maintain and improve both the quality of public services and the interests of UNISON members.

**2.2** Any demonstration which is organised or supported by UNISON must accord with these principles and promote the interests of UNISON and its members. The intention is to ensure that individual members and branches participating in such events behave in such a way as to enhance the Union and not detract from it. Under Rule B 2 branches and regions should not support or encourage membership participation at demonstrations organised by outside bodies whose aims and objectives conflict with those of UNISON.

# Demonstrations Initiated by UNISON

Branch committees, regions, service groups and the union nationally which decide to organise a demonstration will ensure the following:

**3.1** The demonstration is in line with UNISON policy or its aims and objectives.

**3.2** The fullest possible consultation takes place with members.

**3.3** Any activity relating to Industrial Action has been approved in line with UNISON's Industrial Action procedures.

**3.4** Adequate notice of the event is given to the police under the Public Order Act 1986, 5.11 (or its equivalent in the case of Scotland & Northern Ireland) in order that it may be properly policed for the safety of members and the public, particularly when a march on the highway is proposed. Failure to observe this requirement can result in prosecution.

**3.5** Any expenditure incurred in organising the demonstration or to facilitate members' participation must be approved and accounted for in line with UNISON's financial rules and procedures. No payment can be made for party political purposes or to political parties from branch or regional funds.

**3.6** The regional office should be advised of agreed demonstrations in order to provide any necessary co-ordination with other branches and to respond to media enquiries.

**3.7** A Chief Steward must be appointed to take responsibility for maintaining order at the event, liaising with external bodies, and ensuring that UNISON's aims, objectives, policies, rules and this Code of Conduct are applied. S/he will be assisted by a team of official Stewards where necessary. The Chief Steward and Stewards must be easily identifiable and will be wholly accountable to UNISON.

**3.8** Banners, placards and other printed materials associated with the event should be produced or approved by UNISON and should conform with UNISON's aims, objectives, rules and policies. UNISON members wishing to carry banners and placards or issue printed material will be encouraged to use official UNISON materials. UNISON members and individual members of the public carrying, selling or issuing other printed material may be asked to stop and/or leave. The decision of the Chief Steward on such matters will be final.

**3.9** Other organisations wishing to participate will be expected to notify the Chief Steward and to follow his/her direction. This may include taking up specified locations within the event and withdrawal of materials which are deemed not to comply with UNISON's aims and objectives. UNISON members wishing to attend as members of other organisations, or promoting other organisations e.g. by carrying their banners, may be asked to join colleagues engaged in similar activity at a specified location within the event. Members attending in such capacities still remain subject to this Code.

**3.10** Any press or media statements and comment made on behalf of UNISON can only be made by authorised UNISON spokespersons acting in accordance with UNISON's Media Guidelines.

## Demonstrations Initiated by Other Organisations

**4.1** A decision to participate in a demonstration organised by an outside body should be subject to prior approval by the appropriate branch, regional or service group committee after the fullest possible consultation with members.

**4.2** Support for such demonstrations should only be given if it complies with the principles set out in section 2 above.

**4.3** Support should only be given if UNISON is affiliated to the outside organisation or its activities are in line with the aims and objectives of UNISON.

**4.4** It will be expected that any demonstration organised by an outside organisation and endorsed by UNISON will comply with the requirements of the Public Order Act 1986 5.11 (see paragraph 3.4 above).

**4.5** Guidance on expenditure and payments outlined in paragraph 3.5 above also apply here.

**4.6** Branches and regions should not permit or facilitate the use of UNISON banners, placards or other printed materials at demonstrations which do not comply with the principles or guidelines outlined in section 2 above.

**4.7** UNISON representatives from branches, regions, service groups or national level should not make statements to the press or media supporting demonstrations which do not comply with the principles or guidelines outlined above. Any statements made to the media must be in accordance with UNISON's Media Guidelines.

**4.8** Branches, regions and service groups participating in events run by other organisations should identify persons to be responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the UNISON delegation amongst UNISON participants.

## Demonstrations at UNISON Premises

**5.1** Demonstrations at UNISON Premises will impact upon the staff working at those locations. All necessary steps will be taken to safeguard staff interests, and to ensure a safe and secure working environment in accordance with UNISON's legal obligations as an employer.

**5.2** Branches planning a demonstration at UNISON premises must ensure that either

the General Secretary's office or the appropriate Regional Secretary is advised as soon as is reasonably practical. The police should also be advised.

**5.3** Entrances and exits to the buildings must be kept clear, and if necessary arrangements will be made for barriers to be erected prior to any demonstrations. The police may be asked to be present to ensure that the demonstration is orderly and the security of the building(s) and staff safeguarded.

**5.4** Meeting rooms or other facilities will not be made available to demonstrators. Where these are required they should be arranged elsewhere by the demonstration organisers.

**5.5** Demonstrators must stay outside the UNISON premises and not attempt to enter unless invited to do so by an appropriate senior officer.

**5.6** The general provisions of this Code as set out above apply to such demonstrations.

## Demonstrations at UNISON Conferences

**6.1** The guidelines set out in paragraph 5 also apply to demonstrations at UNISON Conferences. This includes complying with the different rules and procedures which operate at Conference.

**6.2** Demonstrations and lobbies must take place outside the conference venue and the police should be advised.

## Behaviour at Demonstrations

**7.1** All members participating in demonstrations must act in a manner which is not prejudicial or detrimental to UNISON. Everyone must be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect, including other UNISON members, staff, stewards and members of the public.

**7.2** UNISON will not tolerate aggressive, intimidating or violent behaviour or language at demonstrations. In such circumstances the Chief Steward in charge of the demonstration/march should be alerted to the situation. Unacceptable behaviour will lead to any individual or individuals being asked to leave the demonstration. Disciplinary action may subsequently be taken against the member(s) concerned.

**7.3** The principles of courtesy and respect should form the basis of any communications on the purpose of the demonstration, whether spoken or written.

**7.4** The directives of approved stewards and the police must be followed, as should any official advice issued regarding the purpose of, or organisation of, the demonstration. UNISON members and members of the public failing to follow these may be asked to leave. The Chief Steward, or Steward acting on his/her

behalf, may seek the assistance of the police in such circumstances. Failure to observe police advice may be in breach of the law leading to possible arrest.

## Future Advice

**8.1** Branches or members requiring advice or assistance should contact their regional secretary or regional service group head.

**8.2** The NEC will monitor the implementation of this Code and revise it in the light of experience.