



STEWARDS POCKET GUIDE



Key Responsibilities of a UNISON steward:



Recruit new members and stewards



Communicate with your members to give them information and find out their issues and concerns



Advise and support your members to the best of your ability



Represent your members views



Keep in touch with your branch

Recruit new members and stewards

The most important role of a steward is to recruit as many members of staff in the areas you cover:

- **Keep a high profile of the union in your workplace** by regularly updating notice boards and circulating the latest information. Your Branch can send you the latest campaign materials and posters. Remember to look at the website (unisonsoutheast.org.uk) for all the latest news.
- **Do your best to be seen** in the workplace, talking to members and discussing their concerns.
- **Find out which of your colleagues are UNISON members** in your workplace and keep in touch with them. This will help you to find out where potential members are.
- **Talk to colleagues** that aren't members and ask them why they haven't joined.
- **Encourage non-members to join the union** – remember the more members we have, the more influence the union has
- **If you are in a large workplace** encourage colleagues to also become a UNISON steward – you can then share the workload. If they aren't ready to become a steward encourage them to consider becoming a workplace contact.

Three simple ways to join UNISON today:



Order a supply of application forms via the online catalogue at unison.org.uk



Call us on **0800 171 2193**



Join online at joinunison.org

Top Recruitment Tips

- 1. Always have application forms with you**
- 2. Talk to new starters as soon as they join**
- 3. Know the reasons to join UNISON:**

- more members means more influence with the employer
- access to free advice and representation on all workplace issues
- wide range of support services, including free legal advice for family members
- average cost of £2.50 a week, less than a pint of beer
- unionised workplaces have better terms & conditions, staff are treated better

And remember the counter arguments:

- staff can't be victimised for joining, it's unlawful
- strikes are very rare and always a last resort, members are always consulted first
- temporary and agency workers can be members

- 4. Talk about and promote local and national successes**
- 5. Breaking the ice to talk about UNISON isn't always easy especially with people you've worked with for a long time**

but tell them you've just been elected steward, ask them to think about joining, find out their gripes about work – we might be able to do something about them

Communicate with your members to give information and find out their issues and concerns

It's important stewards keep in regular communication with members – giving them information from and about UNISON, and talking to them about their issues and concerns. This can be done remotely, eg. newsletter or email, having a visible presence in the workplace (putting up posters etc.) – but talking to members face to face is by far the most successful:

- **Walk round the workplace** when you can, or chat to members during breaks. Make sure members and potential members know you are a steward
- **Hold members meetings** you might be able to get permission for people to have time off to attend from their local managers – the meeting can be very informal
- **Give members any information** received from UNISON – perhaps from the branch or eFocus – or from your local Joint Negotiating Committee. Members will want to know about changes that may be taking place at work, eg reorganisation or changes to procedures, and what UNISON is doing about this. They'll also be interested in pay claims, health and safety advice, union training courses, or new products from our service providers
- **It's also important to find out** what your members concerns or issues are so you can raise these with your management locally or report them to UNISON reps on the negotiating committee through your branch



Advise and support your members to the best of your ability

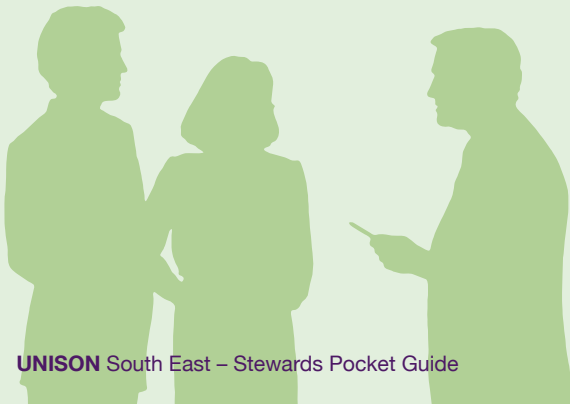
Stewards are expected to give advice and support to their members – but only as far as you feel confident to do so.

UNISON provides training courses for stewards and the law provides for you to get paid time off to attend these, the training helps immensely in giving stewards knowledge and confidence to advise and support members. You can find details of upcoming training at unionsoutheast.org.uk/union_education

Some problems raised by members are simple, you might just be acting as a sounding board for them to sort things out for themselves, or can point them to someone else to give them the answer

Some are more complex – you might be able to deal with these after going on training, but even the most experienced stewards find that sometimes they encounter issues where they need to get advice from their branch or a member of UNISON staff

If you don't know the answer or what to do, don't worry – just make sure you make a note of the query and ask your branch for assistance, but remember the golden rule – always get back to the member with an answer, even if it's that we can't do anything to help on this occasion



Representing members

As soon as you are elected as a steward, take the opportunity to introduce yourself to the local manager and check that UNISON has formally notified your employer of your appointment

If a member comes to you with a problem:

- **Get as much information as possible** – the more information you know about the problem and who's involved, the easier it is to help
- **Work out if it's an individual or collective issue** – this will help you decide how best to deal with the problem. The UNISON Representation Guide and Stewards Handbook will help you with this and give good guidance on how to tackle issues – you should have been sent these with your stewards pack when you were elected
- **Try to deal with the matter informally first** – small problems can very quickly become stressful and protracted as soon as formal procedures are used
- **Encourage the member to develop a relationship with their supervisor/ manager and contact them to discuss the problem informally**
- **If the member agrees you can contact the local manager/supervisor to discuss the matter in confidence** – sometimes a phone call to a local manager / supervisor can solve the issue quickly and easily
- **If the issue cannot be resolved** informally, talk to the member about formal routes such as grievances

If you have lost your Stewards Handbook or UNISON Representation Guide you should be able to replace them by asking your branch or ordering from the online catalogue on the UNISON website (unison.org.uk).



Represent your members' views

There are times when stewards should speak up to represent their members views:

- **Your branch or UNISON nationally might ask you** to find out members views on an important bargaining issue, such as a pay claim or offer
- **Your members may have a concern** about something happening at work and ask you to raise it with your managers – don't be afraid to ask advice from your branch first if you're not sure about this, or to take a colleague in with you to help
- **There may be collective issues going on** at work that should be raised at your employer's Joint Negotiating Committee – perhaps worries about restructuring, problems with equipment, or procedures or systems that just don't work. Take the initiative and report these to your branch so the UNISON reps on the committee can raise them with management formally
- **It might be a good idea to find out who the UNISON Rep is** on the Staff Side or Joint Negotiating Committee and arrange to meet them to introduce yourself and find out more about how it works
- **Don't be afraid to speak out**, UNISON and your members will welcome this – if in doubt seek advice first



Keep in touch with your branch

- **Keep in contact with your branch** – they will support you in your role as steward, giving advice and guidance, possibly providing training or mentoring opportunities
- **The branch will also be able to assist you** with securing workplace facilities – noticeboards, email address and perhaps even an office – and negotiating time off, and should provide you with a list of the members you cover
- **Find out who represents your workplace** on the Branch Committee – every employer the branch deals with should be represented on the committee, it may be a senior steward or a convenor for your department or building. In smaller branches this could be you
- **Send regular reports/updates** – the branch can only support you if you keep it informed of what's happening where you work



Branch/Branch Secretary's contact details:

Support & training available

UNISON endeavours to provide advice, support and training to all stewards, whether new or experienced

Your Branch will be able to provide support and guidance and will be expecting you to contact them. If you haven't got their contact details contact UNISON Direct on **0800 0 857 857**.

In emergencies UNISON Direct may also be able to give basic advice and support. It is open 6am to midnight Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm on Saturday.

UNISON runs a comprehensive training programme for stewards

Have you been on a training course yet? If not, email **educationse@unison.co.uk** or call **01483 406 502** for details and to register.

Education & Training available

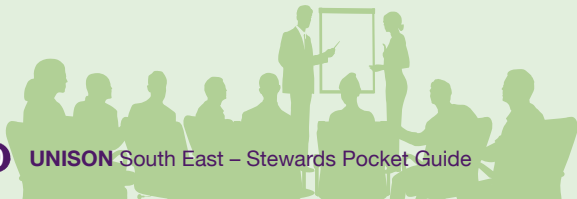
Stage 1 – U In UNISON (one day)

Stage 2 – Organising Steward Course (five days in total)

Stage 3 – A range of courses to develop your skills around negotiating and representation including:

- Developing Representation Skills
- Negotiating Skills
- Equality In Your Branch
- Employment Law

Remember, you have a legal right to reasonable paid time off for training in your union industrial relations duties.



Membership services

UNISON Welfare/There for You

UNISON's registered charity provides a unique confidential service just for UNISON members and their families.

There for You offers:

- Debt advice
- Support and information
- Financial assistance
- Wellbeing breaks

Call on **020 7121 5620** or email **thereforyou@unison.co.uk** or visit **unison.org.uk/thereforyou**. For immediate debt advice call **0800 389 330**. Charity registration number: 1023552

Legal services for you at work and your family at home

UNISON's legal support includes free help with most work problems that members may have. This can either be from our specialist in-house lawyers and a team of trade union solicitors that are on hand to help, or by local union reps, branches and officers in the UK. But our help doesn't just stop when you leave work. We offer free initial legal advice to members on any matter not related to work, plus a range of other legal help for members and their family.

To find out more go to **unison.org.uk/get-help**

100% compensation for an accident or injury

If UNISON members are affected by an illness or accident that wasn't their fault, the union will help them. Our team of legal experts will give members the advice and support they need and the compensation they deserve – and it's all free. Members keep 100% of the compensation they are awarded, and won't pay a penny for our legal team's help and support.

Members should be advised to contact UNISON Direct on **0800 0 857 857**

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UNISONProtect.com

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visionexpress.com/unison

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lighthousefa.co.uk

HEALTH & DENTAL PLANS

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youbenefit.co.uk/unison

UNION ENERGY

0800 094 9039
unionenergy.co.uk

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croydeunison.co.uk

LV=Britannia Rescue

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lv.com/UNISON

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