

Setting up a Disabled Members Self Organised Group (SOG) in your Branch - How to Guide



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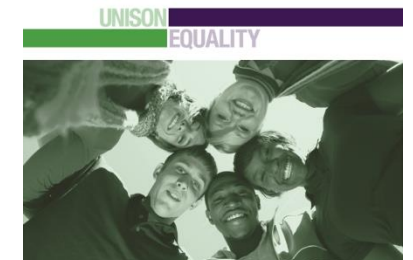
Aims of this workshop

- ❑ Understand what a Self-Organised Group (SOG) is and why they are important to UNISON
- ❑ Discuss how a Disabled Members SOG could be organised
- ❑ Discuss how to prepare, implement and support a Disabled Members SOG
- ❑ Give you the tools and enthusiasm to return to your Branch and set up a SOG

Self-Organised Groups in UNISON

UNISON has four recognised Self Organised Groups:

- Women Members
- Black Members
- Disabled Members
- Lesbians and Gay men, Bisexual and Transgender Members



What do SOG's have in Common?

- ❑ All four groups share common experiences of discrimination in the community, the workplace and the union
- ❑ Self-organisation encourages members in each group to come together to discuss and take forward their own issues and give each other support
- ❑ Members may find themselves a member of more than one group
- ❑ Self-organisation is a key part of UNISON's strategy for achieving equality

UNISON's Rules

Self-organisation is extremely important, The Rule Book states how UNISON shall promote opportunities for all SOGs to meet the purposes set out below

- Meet to share concerns and aspirations and establish their own priorities
- Elect their own representatives
- Have adequate and agreed funding and other resources, including education and training, access, publicity and communications
- Work to build confidence and encourage participation and provide opportunities for the fuller involvement of disadvantaged members
- Work within established policies, rules and constitutional provisions of the Union

‘Why have a Disabled members SOG in your Branch?’

Discuss and attempt to answer the question, ‘ Why have a Disabled Members SOG in your Branch?’ As a group you will need to talk us through your answer.

You can use flip charts post it notes and agree someone to feedback

Think about the potential benefits this would have on

- Individual members
- Your Branch
- UNISON

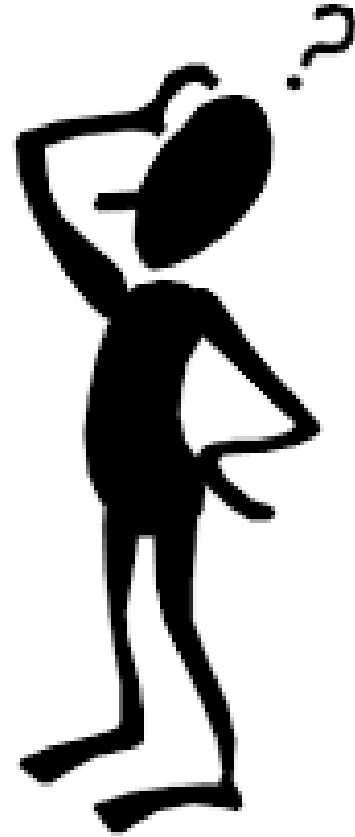
Feedback ‘Why have a Disabled members SOG in your Branch?’

Someone to feedback a couple of minutes each group

Think about the potential benefits this would have on

- Individual members
- Your Branch
- UNISON

Who should set up a Branch Disabled members SOG?



How to get Started?

Your Branch Organising Framework could identify how the Branch will start up and maintain a SOG:

- ❑ The Branch can make members aware of SOG's within UNISON and ask for volunteers from the disabled member community to help set one up –
- ❑ In 2021 there were **2566** members who identify as disabled in SE region, **53** branches have **2%** or more disabled members
- ❑ Equality Officers – **48** branches have EO's in the Region (**just under 50%**) they have a co-ordinating role between the SOG's and the Branch
- ❑ Disabled Members Officers - **29** Branches have at least one Disabled Members Officer in our Region

Branch Committee could help you

- ❑ Finding out who your Disabled members are (If in doubt ask your regional officers)
- ❑ Providing opportunities for Disabled members to meet – promoting regional and nation events to all members - (2022 Year of Disabled Workers webinars – anyone can attend) we want members to find out about how they can support their colleagues
- ❑ Encouraging members 'self-identify' as disabled
- ❑ Provide resources and support for the group including finances
- ❑ Ensuring disabled members SOG is represented on the Branch committee by asking for reports at BC
- ❑ Notify region when your SOG is established
- ❑ Encourage active SOG members to participate in Regional, National meetings and conferences

What do you think a Disabled members SOG should look like?

There is no single model – each branch will have its own way which works for them!

- SOG's should follow UNISON's Rule Book
- Have meetings to network and discuss issues
- A flexible structure to maximise involvement
- Access to the group should be open to all members who identify as disabled
- Members must be informed or communicated with - about the group so that they can join or tell their colleagues about it

Setting up a SOG

Think about your branch and how it would benefit from a Disabled Member's SOG. Using what we have spoken about so far, write down how you think you could set up a Disabled members SOG:

Think about:

- Who, what, where when and how
- Remember the UNISON rule book and how this would impact your plan

Before Approaching the Branch

Do some research:

- Analysis and mapping, where do your disabled members work is there a time that would suit them to meet?
- Understanding and highlighting that members can 'self-identify' as disabled to attend
- What is the Branch view on Self Organising Groups have the Branch had success before – what happened?
- Think about the finance you might need - a budget may include hiring a space to meet, or meeting in a public place? Creating posters, leaflets to advertise, email or posting invites or tie your event advertising into an AGM mail out?

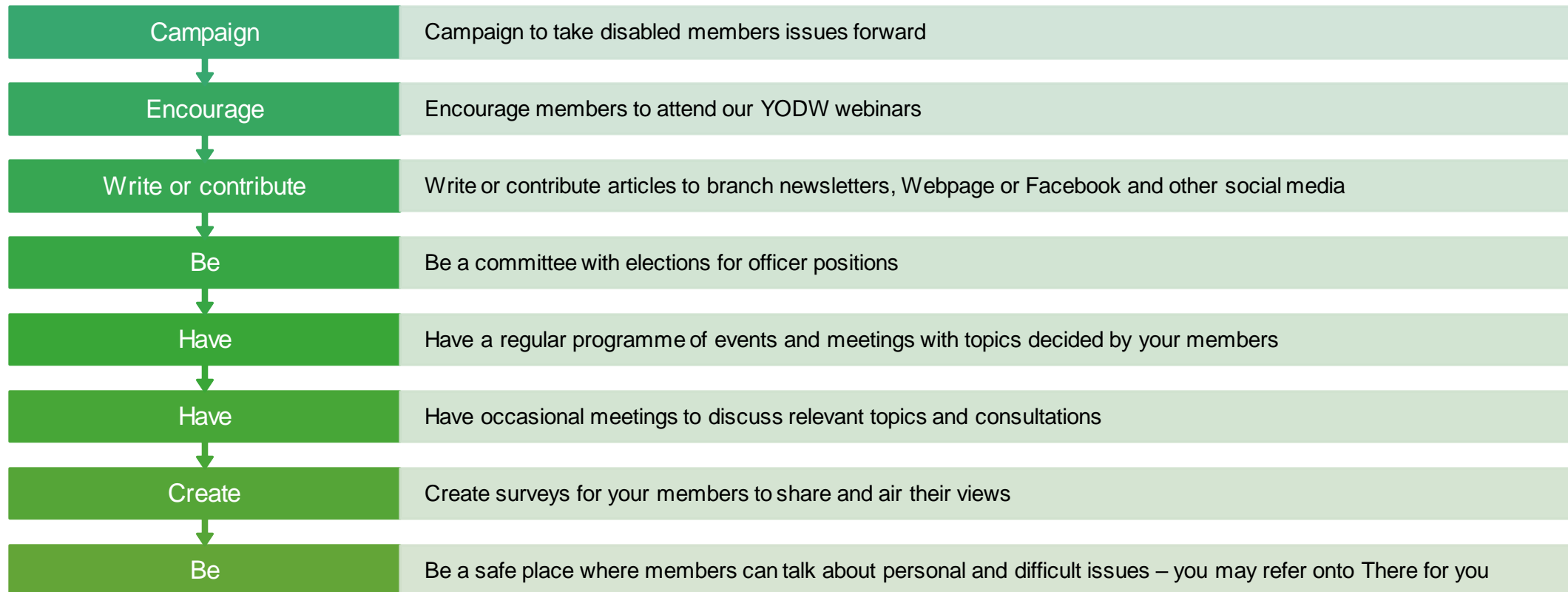
Raise your proposal to the Branch

- ❑ Talk through your ideas and ask for support from the Branch Sec or Equality Officer

Once approval is given

- ❑ Plan a meeting of Disabled members using the "Social model of Disability" - we believe it is the way that society organises that creates the barriers to inclusion and prevents disabled people from taking an equal part in life. Because of this discrimination, many people have a hidden disability which they prefer not to disclose, even to their union, for fear of being discriminated against. Some dislike the term 'disabled' and using it to describe themselves
- ❑ This is how members 'self-identify' i.e., how they wish to describe themselves. It is not about how others see them or how others might classify them

2022 Year of Disabled Workers what could a SOG do?



Considerations for Meetings

Fully accessible venue

Accessibility passports filled out

- you can provide what is needed - ramps, hearing loops, BSL interpreter, spaces for carers or facilitators

Ask Branch to pay any additional expenses

Large print or braille documents or printed on different colour paper

Maintain confidentiality for those who do not wish to disclose to their employer

Dietary requirements

The First Meeting

- ❑ Plan – an agenda might help you – who is going to say what
- ❑ Fully accessible venue
- ❑ Best time – and duration, lunchtime or after shift? Limit to an hour and a half?
- ❑ Refreshments (ask the branch for tea coffee and a sandwich or cakes?)
- ❑ Have time for questions and ideas – find out what the members want from future meetings, how they want the Disabled members SOG to run
- ❑ Next steps and who is going to take them
- ❑ If a handful turn up - don't be disappointed – from small acorns ...if a small group has identified something it wants to do – go with it, more will follow ..

How to keep you disabled members SOG going?

If you call meetings and very few show up – what do you do?

- Recognise that something needs to change
- Ask why – would a newsletter, regular email or other social media work more effectively?
- During the pandemic many have had to use Teams or Zoom - would that work?
- Keep the channels of communication open so that disabled members know where to go to for help and advice
- It's important to keep trying to bring disabled members together who may be affected by similar issues
- Put on a training or personal development event – have an outside speaker – region can help with this too
- Organise something lighter – a social event, craft show or demonstration of alternative therapies
- Your casework might alert you to issues of discrimination – the employers' statistics on equality might do this too Workforce Disability Equality Standard for NHS or other Equality and Diversity Inclusion statistics

Checklist/Actions

- Research your Disabled member community
- Speak to your branch and get their backing for your plans
- Spread the word and get people involved
- Set up your first meeting
- Remove barriers to access by planning ahead

Summary

- We have covered how to.. and why
- How do you feel about thinking about setting something up or supporting your existing Disabled members SOG in the Year of Disabled Workers?
- What is your action plan or next steps, now you know how it's done?
- Remember the Regional Disabled members Committee is there to assist – you may want to think about joining us our AGM is 6th December 2022 and we are keen to encourage more branches to send reps
- Sarah Barwick our Regional Chair
- There is also a National Disabled members Committee which you access via the Regional Committee

Future Events
– YODW
Webinars all
1-2pm on
Teams

August 16th – Endometriosis Awareness

September 21st – Understanding Dementia

October 10th – Mental Health Awareness

November 4th – The Disability Pay Gap

December 5th – Understanding Access to Work

**To book your place on the webinars above please email
Member Learning at membereducationse@unison.co.uk
with your membership number**

Regional Disabled members Committee AGM – 6th
December