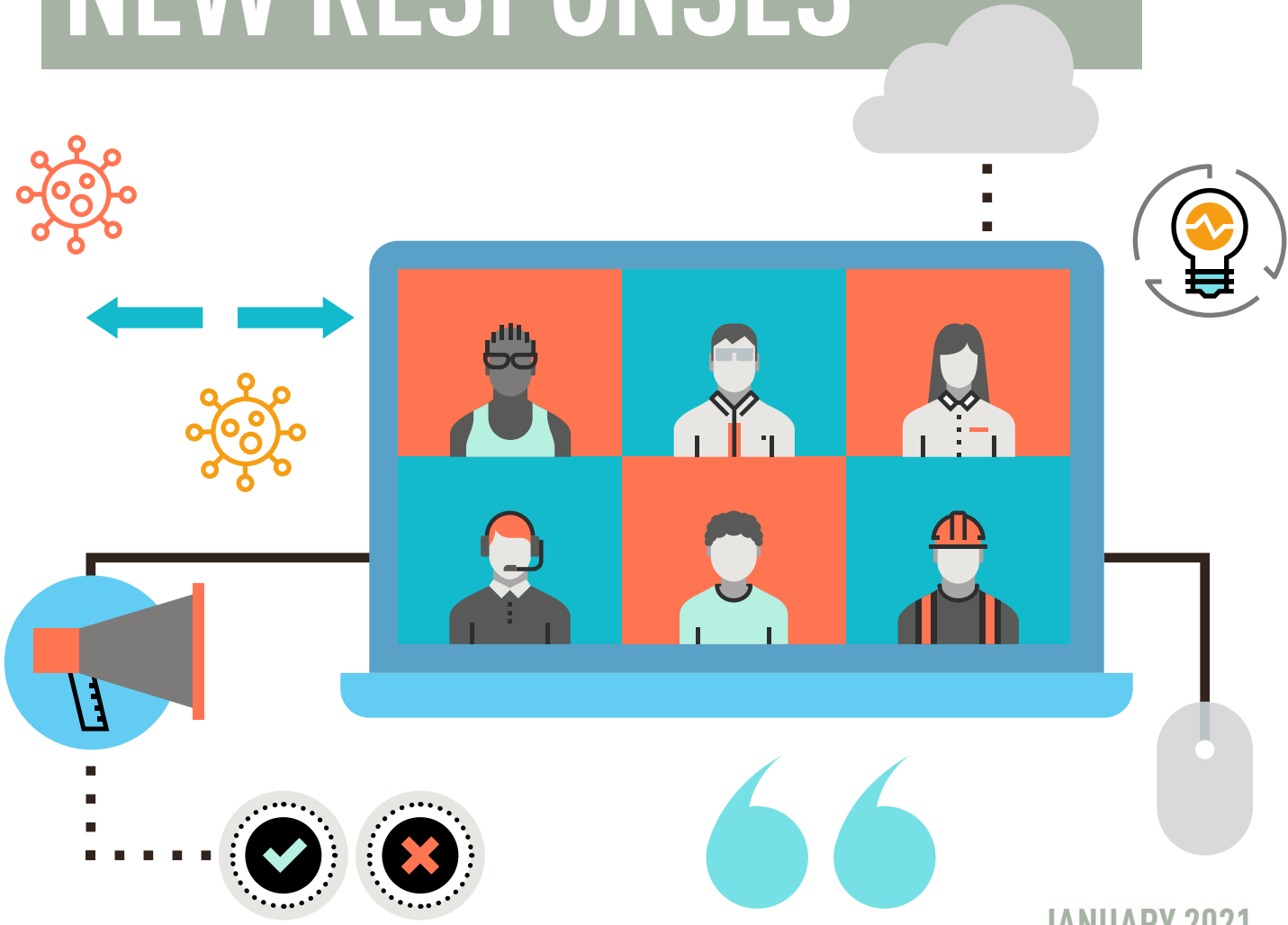UNIONS21
building tomorrow's unions

COVID-19 AND THE WORK OF TRADE UNIONS

NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW RESPONSES

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Author

Tom Hunt is Deputy Director of the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI) at the University of Sheffield. He is the co-leader of SPERI's Labour & Decent Work research theme. His research focuses on efforts by unions, workers, states, industry and civil society to improve labour standards.

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Unions 21

Unions 21 exists to support unions to increase their influence, impact and effectiveness within the world of work. We will do this by working with unions, supporters and stakeholders to create an open space for research, innovation and activity to assist unions to secure a better life for working people. This paper is part of its work on new economies, new workers.

Unions 21

77 St John Street

London EC1M 4NN

www.unions21.org.uk

Executive summary

- The pandemic has changed how unions operate. Unions have adopted new ways for workers to act and speak together, and new forms and methods of campaigning, communications, recruitment, negotiating, lobbying, training and representation, both on and offline, have been developed. Whilst there have been big changes, unions' central purpose to defend their members' interests and improve work has not changed. Unions have found new ways to do this and have protected lives and livelihoods.

- Unions have secured wins for members such as the introduction of the furlough scheme and greater provision of PPE, influenced the national debate about conditions of key workers and put the spotlight on low-paid, unsafe and under-valued work that many millions of workers face daily.

- Whilst the pandemic has brought new challenges, overall unions have a reinvigorated sense of purpose. Staff teams have come together, member engagement has increased and deepened, activism has increased, and there are encouraging signs membership will have increased during 2020.

- The report focuses on changes to member engagement; recruitment and retention; advocacy and influencing; training members and supporting reps; representation of members, and union democracy and governance. It also looks at how unions adapted to remote working.

- Each chapter ends by highlighting key findings and new challenges and questions for unions to consider as they plan for 2021 and beyond.

- Unions need to reflect on the changes they made during 2020 and assess what has worked and why, and to reflect on how COVID-19 is changing work and what changes unions may need to make as a result.

Contents

1 : Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned working life upside down for millions of workers and with it, the work of trade unions. When large parts of the economy were shut down, when going to work became a matter of life and death, and when work for millions of people, including most union staff, moved into their homes, how did unions continue to function effectively?
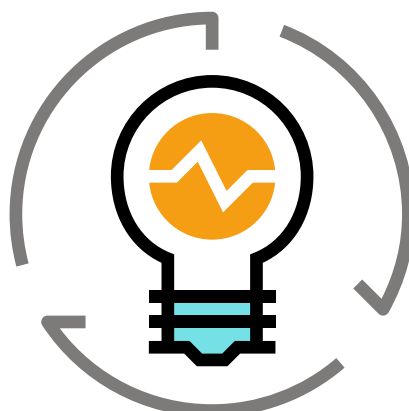
This report explores that question and many other challenges that unions faced and continue to grapple with during the pandemic. It shows how unions are finding new ways for workers to act and speak together, and how new forms and methods of campaigning, communications, recruitment, negotiating, lobbying, training and representation, both on and offline, have been developed. It also outlines how, at the same time as overhauling their organising activities, internal processes, governance and democracy, unions and their staff have had to adapt to the challenges of remote working, and the stresses and strains of balancing this work with homeschooling, caring responsibilities and health concerns.

Where unions have had to innovate, it has broadly not come in the form of a quick-fix new bit of tech or process to be bolted onto existing union structures. Instead, innovation has come from engaging with members, understanding the issues they face and trying new initiatives (which may or may not work) to collectively resolve them. The report shows how the fundamentals of union organising haven't changed, they've just, at times, needed to be done in different ways. In presenting its findings about the impact of the pandemic on unions, the report encourages unions to assess what worked and why, and to assess the situations that their current and future members now find themselves in at the start of 2021 and how that might change in the short and long term.

Reflection and evaluation is an extremely hard task to do whilst the crisis still rages but the pandemic has shown why it is an urgent task because just as unions have acted quickly, so have businesses and employers. The pandemic provides evidence of how work in many sectors and industries could be temporarily reshaped, and how in many instances it is already being permanently reshaped, sometimes in ways that could benefit workers but also in ways that could lead to fewer jobs, less work and worse employment conditions.

As the full economic impact of COVID-19 becomes more apparent day by day and with a steep rise in unemployment forecast, the project has found evidence of unions that are asking themselves hard questions about how best to support their members, whether their current structures and processes could be improved, and whether long-term strategic changes are needed as a result.

Data

The evidence presented in this report was collected between October-December 2020 and comes from two primary sources:

- 149 responses to an online survey from union staff that asked questions about how the pandemic has affected their work and the work of their union. Responses were provided from staff in 33 unions from countries including the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the USA.[1]

- 27 in-depth interviews with union officials from unions and union federations in the UK, Australia, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the USA.[2] Interviewees in a wide range of union roles were interviewed including General Secretaries, Deputy and Assistant General Secretaries, Chiefs of Staff, Heads of Organising, Training Managers and Coordinators, Directors of Policy and Communications, Regional Organisers and Workplace Organisers.

The evidence presented is of course just a snapshot of the vast array of work that unions have done and are doing during the pandemic. It would be impossible to do justice to the full extent of that work. The unions that have contributed to the project represent employed and self-employed workers in a wide range of sectors and industries including the creative industries, education, energy, financial services, health and social care (all professions but specifically midwifery, nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, radiography and social care). manufacturing, public administration (specifically central and local government), and transportation (specifically aviation, maritime and rail) meaning that the examples presented are drawn from across the union movement and across the world of work.

Report structure

The report proceeds as follows. Part 1 (Chapters 2-3) sets the context for the work of trade unions by outlining the rapid and far reaching changes to working lives caused by the pandemic. Chapter 2 looks at those workers in frontline / key worker roles; those workers whose work ceased either temporarily (through furloughing and/or the shutdown of specific sectors and industries) or permanently (through redundancy), and the hardship this has brought about, and those who have worked from home and the acceleration of digital work practices this has entailed. Chapter 3 outlines the changes that unions had to make to their own working arrangements and practices.

Part 2 (Chapters 4-9) explores the impact of the pandemic on unions across six different features of their work: member engagement (Chapter 4); recruitment and retention (Chapter 5); training and supporting reps (Chapter 6); advocacy and influencing (Chapter 7); representation of members (Chapter 8), and union democracy and governance (Chapter 9). Whilst each chapter looks at a different topic, the six features of unions all interact and reinforce each other. Together they represent the organising principles behind strong unions.

In Part 3, Chapter 10 discusses the need for reflection and evaluation on what has been learnt from the work of unions during the pandemic so far, and considers the challenges and questions that will need to be addressed as unions plan for 2021 and beyond.

PART ONE CONTEXT FOR ADAPTATION

2: 2020 and the transformation of work

In early 2020 when the world was becoming aware of the full dangers of COVID-19, unions were clear: a health emergency is an economic emergency and coronavirus would have disastrous implications for public health, jobs and livelihoods unless swift action was taken. Unions were quick to argue that adequate health and safety measures were needed in every workplace to prevent going to work in a pandemic becoming a matter of life and death and risking the virus spreading even more rapidly. In the weeks before the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic on March 11th, UK unions, led by the TUC, were on the front foot calling for employers and the UK government to support workers affected by COVID-19 by raising the level of sick pay so workers could afford to self-isolate, ensuring adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) was provided for everyone whose work brought them into close contact with others, and calling for emergency financial support for hard-hit industries and groups of workers, such as the self-employed. When the UK followed most other countries in Europe and introduced a national lockdown the vast impact of COVID-19 on jobs and livelihoods had been laid bare.

The pandemic has led to huge changes to the way everyone works and nearly every action that unions have taken since March has been influenced by COVID-19 in some way. Broadly, the situations that workers have faced during the pandemic can be categorised in three ways:

- Workers who have continued to work in their normal place of work through the pandemic, including those in 'key worker' roles, not just those on the frontline of the health emergency but all workers who have kept vital services and infrastructure operating throughout the pandemic.

- Workers whose work has ceased either temporarily (through furloughing and/or the shutdown of specific sectors and industries) or permanently (through redundancy).

- Workers who have worked from home during the pandemic.

The three broad categories are not mutually exclusive. Many workers fall into several, for example, retail and hospitality staff who were furloughed but later resumed work in public-facing roles, or freelance workers who have done what work they can from home but whose main income streams dried up due to industry shutdowns. However the categories present a picture of the ways in which work for millions of people has been changed by the pandemic and the differing levels of risk workers have faced. They provide the transformed context for everything that unions have done during the pandemic to engage with their members and other members of the workforce.

Protecting lives and livelihoods

UK government guidance to work from home to prevent transmission of the virus led to a large increase in remote working. At the height of the lockdown in April, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that 47% of people in employment did some work at home, of which 86% did so as a result of the pandemic.[3] An ONS study in 2019 found that 12% of those in employment worked from home in the week they were surveyed.[4] This mass shift for work to move into the home had clear safety benefits but also revealed inequalities about who is able to benefit from the greater safety that remote working provides. Higher earners are more likely to be able to work from home[5] whereas lower earners in frontline jobs faced far greater risks, particularly women, black and minority ethnic and young workers.[6] As offices and service sector industries reopened unions were at the forefront of calling on employers to ensure all workplaces were made safe to return to and to assess whether work could continue to take place remotely in the interests of safety.[7] Unions, notably UCU amongst many, were prominent in arguing that returning to workplaces too quickly risked the health of their members and the wider community.[8] The mass shift to remote working has also led unions, notably Prospect, to raise awareness and challenge employers about the growing use of workplace surveillance tools to monitor employees.[9] Whilst other unions such as Fórsa in Ireland have called for legal frameworks around remote working to be strengthened.[10]

Millions of jobs were protected by the Job Retention (furlough) scheme which the TUC was instrumental in persuading the UK government to introduce and also in designing the scheme. At its peak the scheme supported 8.9 million jobs preventing the major rise in unemployment that many feared as the pandemic hit.[11] The TUC and individual unions were similarly instrumental in persuading the government to support self-employed workers (described further in Chapter 7).

Every worker saw big changes in 2020. This brief overview demonstrates how central unions have been to shaping the support they have received and the crucial role of unions to protect lives and livelihoods.

3: Trade unions and remote working

In March following government advice to work from home unions moved to remote working. Most staff have not returned to a formal workplace setting. The shift to remote working, combined with ongoing social distancing measures has led to a rapid adoption of new ways of working.

This chapter looks at the practical challenges that union staff have experienced whilst working remotely and how unions have sought to overcome them. It is important to state that a huge amount of union work over the last nine months has been carried out, planned and implemented by people working in their own homes, often for the first time, who had to quickly adapt and work together to find new ways to do that work. Many participants in the project highlighted how teams came together to collaborate at speed in extremely challenging circumstances and paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of their staff and colleagues. As unions reflect on their work during the pandemic, learning the lessons from this collaboration will be essential.

From the office to WFH

Over half (57%) of survey respondents have solely worked from home since March 2020 with a further 40% having worked from home and their usual workplace. For organisations whose staff were primarily office-based before March, this is a big shift in working arrangements. Whilst a minority of staff worked from home before March and whilst some organisers (especially in regional offices) were used to remote working due to their extensive

travel, unions are predominantly office-based organisations. As one interviewee put it, since March *"we have in effect turned our organization inside out"*. Similarly, another remarked that:

> "We kind of managed to turn the organization around on a sixpence...we didn't have the equipment or structures for homeworking and very quickly, I mean within a week we had everyone working pretty calmly from home."

But whilst remote working has become standard for many union employees it required a steep learning curve for the many staff working remotely from their homes for the first time, and for unions who had to develop new processes for a new situation where most, if not all, staff worked remotely.

Some union staff were initially furloughed. This was primarily staff in call centres and those in front of house/reception and administrative assistance roles. Some survey respondents and interviewees, who were not furloughed, highlighted that this was a contributory factor in an increase to their workload. For example, one senior leader explained that during the UK's first lockdown *"our industrial staff became self-servicing"* which required everyone to 'muck in' and share tasks they may not normally do. Whilst this is seen by some in positive terms

as helping to build stronger connections between staff, and to the development of new skills, some staff provide a more downbeat assessment:

"While admin staff were on furlough I had to do extra hours to accommodate the tasks that would normally have been done by them, or spend time finding someone who could do them, or train me to do them. Phone calls were missed when I was in meetings and couldn't answer the phone."

The value of investing in IT and of the union IT department

INFRASTRUCTURE

The first challenge of the move to remote working was ensuring all staff had access to adequate IT. Prior to COVID some unions were already moving in the direction of greater flexibility. The Royal College of Midwives (RCM), for example, as per their contingency planning, had already issued all staff with a laptop and iPhone and introduced Microsoft Teams meaning they were well set up for remote working when it was required. However, other unions had to quickly get laptops to staff and facilitate IT equipment to be taken from offices and set up at home. This placed great strain upon unions' often small IT departments who were routinely described by interviewees as 'heroic'.

Remote working has highlighted the importance of unions investing in their IT systems and having the same systems in place across the entire organisation. Some unions were already using video conferencing platforms but most were not, even if they had the tools available to them. Most have settled for Zoom or MS Teams. For example, as the pandemic hit, the Pharmacists' Defence Association Union (PDAU) invested in MS Teams licenses for all of their staff and their elected reps network. The annual cost of a license (£50pp) is seen as a prudent investment, far outweighed by the savings generated from reduced travel costs for each individual.

PLATFORMS

The rapid uptake in the use of online platforms is illustrated by answers to survey questions that asked respondents to reflect on whether the pandemic has changed how they do their job. 72% said there have been significant changes and 27% said there have been slight changes. Just 1% said there had been no change to how they do their job. When asked to explain what those changes were, most respondents referred to the replacement of all face to face meetings and activities to online meetings and activities, namely video calls and email. One respondent described how *"I now spend all day at a computer. I used to travel throughout the North of England regularly and have much more face-to-face and group interaction. Now I just answer emails and attend video meetings."* Respondents describe how a lot of peer-to-peer learning has taken place as colleagues became more familiar with using new platforms.

Challenges caused by remote working

LOSS OF INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

Whilst the rapid takeup of new communication tools helps colleagues work together and keep in touch with each other, virtual interaction does not provide the full benefits of face-to-face contact. Numerous survey respondents cited the negative impact on their wellbeing caused by isolation at home and in particular highlighted the loss of informal conversations with colleagues which in some instances, has created a 'formalisation' of working interactions. Whilst the loss of informal contact with colleagues can remove distraction it was frequently cited in interviews and survey responses as leading to a range of negative consequences. These include: a sense of staff not being as aware of what is happening in parts of the union outside of their team; not being able to pick up informal intelligence, tips and advice from colleagues; enhanced difficulty at resolving conflict if arguments between colleagues arise;

missing early warning signs about staff who might be struggling; the slow erosion of bonds between colleagues, even those that they are in regular email and video contact with; and, as one organiser out it, the loss of *"just the serendipity of bumping into somebody and having a conversation which gives you a sort of light bulb moment."* One participant captured both the potential intensity of online meetings and for confusion to arise by describing how in online meetings *"the participant is "on it" from the start, there is no social interaction where small problems are resolved before they become significant, where unconscious cues are picked up about direction and meaning."*

A particular challenge faces new starters and junior colleagues, two groups of staff whose loss of institutional knowledge and practical advice that is gained in an office environment is felt more acutely in a remote working situation.

LONGER HOURS AND HIGHER WORK INTENSITY

A majority of survey respondents (55%) reported working more hours than usual since March. 41% reported that their hours had stayed the same and just 2% said they had worked fewer hours than usual. Respondents also indicated that whether their hours increased or stayed the same, the intensity of their work has increased. Longer working hours are, in part, due to staff facing a higher workload caused by the pandemic but responses also reveal it is due to changes brought about by remote working including the replacement of commuting time with more work which elongates the working day, the scheduling of back-to-back online meetings, and not taking breaks for fresh air and away from the screen. As people work from home for longer the risks of overwork are becoming better known, as are ways to mitigate them, but on the other hand longer working hours at home can quickly become normalised contributing to an enhanced risk of burnout.

The positives of remote working

Whilst remote working can lead to staff feeling isolated, it has also been the catalyst for closer working within teams and across whole organisations. One notable feature is the increased frequency of team meetings, held online, that was reported by many staff. Not only are meetings (both one-to-ones and team meetings) more frequent but they are also better attended. As the workload of staff increased when the pandemic hit, team meetings served as an essential way to share information and improve coordination but also to check in with team members to maintain regular contact. While there has been a drop-off in the frequency of meetings from the early weeks and months of the pandemic, the frequency still appears to be higher than before March. Staff also report positively that the dynamics of online team meetings have changed to remove a sense of hierarchy which encourages more staff to feel confident to participate effectively.

Whilst team meetings provide 'formal' contact, staff also describe how other new initiatives have been established to counter the loss of informal conversations. These include setting up regular online coffee mornings, virtual birthday celebrations and leaving get-togethers, and a big increase in WhatsApp groups (to mix formal and informal office-like chat).

Amongst senior union leaders there is widespread awareness of the pressures that many staff face whilst remote working. This has led some to make new investments and changes that are worth highlighting:

• Unions have invested in new tools and services designed to protect staff wellbeing. One smaller union without significant HR capacity has signed up to a company called Citation to provide staff with access to online wellbeing training and resources, whilst another is investing to purchase licenses for the UK Health and Safety Executive's stress survey tool that will be made available to staff. A third union has developed a Lone Working Policy to reduce the risks for staff associated with remote work.

IMPACT ON TRAVEL

Whilst the inability to access the office and the workplaces of members is a source of frustration for some, there is widespread contentment about the time savings gained by not commuting or travelling long distances to meetings. This particularly applies to organisers who cover large regions but also for senior union leaders. One General Secretary described how a two-day trip to Scotland for one meeting could now be replaced with two days of online meetings, and how online working meant they were now able to dip into parts of meetings and negotiations as and when their input is required, leading to a sense that they are now more productive. Another General Secretary reported:

"There was one day a few weeks ago where I went to Exeter in the morning and Cardiff in the afternoon from here [home]...I did a session for trainees at Exeter University and then in the afternoon, I had a meeting with the Minister of Education in Wales."

The almost complete halt in travel has led to savings in travel and accommodation budgets. One union is reinvesting these savings in new staff. Whilst these savings are unlikely to be replicated to the same extent in future years as travel becomes more possible, it is an open question about the extent to which travel will now be considered essential or even acceptable within unions.

COVID-19 AND THE WORK OF TRADE UNIONS
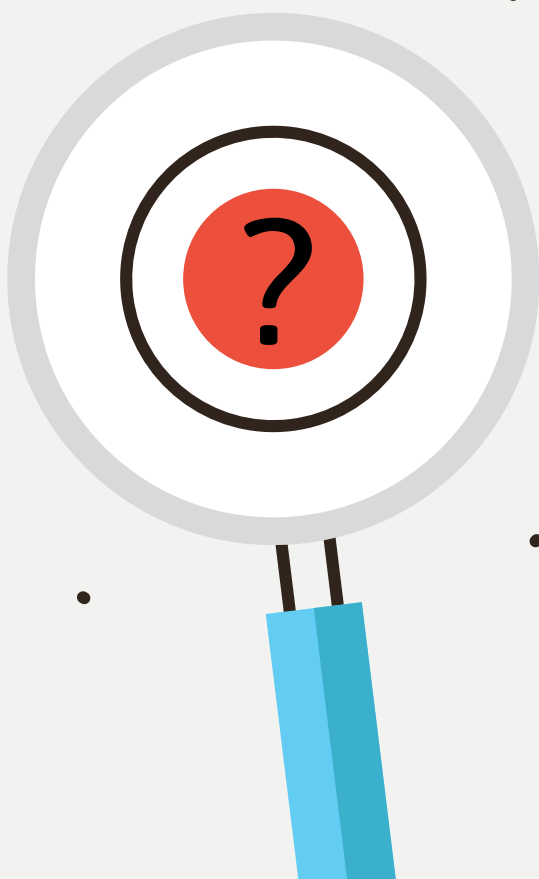
KEY FINDINGS

- Staff faced a steep learning curve in how to work effectively from home. A majority report working more hours than usual. This highlights a potential risk of burnout and exhaustion.

- The long-term move to greater remote working is now a live debate within the movement, with recognition of the need to balance greater flexibility with the impact on individuals and teams of losing in-person contact.

- Some unions are thinking about new ways to structure their organisations and working practices to reflect the new landscape.

- Remote working has highlighted the need for continuous and effective investment in technology for all unions, regardless of size.

Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

After ten months of remote working, much of which was through necessity learnt on the go, combined with ten months of higher workloads, it is clear that reflection about the pros and cons of remote working is much needed. Consulting extensively with staff to seek their views and learn how they have experienced remote working will be an essential part of this process. In thinking about how they will work in the future, some new challenges and questions for unions to begin considering include:

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE WAYS FOR 'HYBRID WORKING'?

Many staff don't want a full-time return to an office but do want access to an office to interact with colleagues. This will require unions to think about what the purpose of the office is and whether their offices and processes are equipped to meet the needs of staff. One union has brought in a digital consultant to help rethink how they are structured to increase coordination and cooperation whilst staff work remotely. Questions to consider include, do existing offices provide enough meeting rooms and collaborative spaces, as well as quiet working spaces? How will team meetings work if teams are split between home and the office? Will investment in new video conferencing technology be needed? Should there be 'office days' and 'WFH' days? And crucially, any moves towards hybrid working will need to be managed to avoid inadvertently creating a two-tier office culture.

HOW MANY OFFICES WILL UNIONS NEED AND WHERE SHOULD STAFF BE LOCATED?

Unions are already rethinking their physical footprint with some office leases already being allowed to expire and active consideration is being given to the potential sales of large Head Offices and downsizing to smaller premises. One senior interviewee said:

[We are] "using the crisis if you like to accelerate some of the things that we might well have ended up doing in two or three years time but doing it now. We will be quite a different kind of organization in 12 months time I suspect."

When unions are planning their future workplaces they will also need to consider whether the location of staff matters, or if it matters for some roles and not others. Several senior interviewees remarked that remote working potentially opens up a much larger pool of candidates who may now wish to work for the union if physically moving to a new location is no longer required. Yet, in this context, managing how new and existing staff develop strong bonds when they could be large distances apart would become even more important.

WHAT NEW SKILLS WILL STAFF NEED IN THE FUTURE AND WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

Staff have learnt new ways of working, developed new IT skills and established new working processes. As unions plan how they will work in the future thinking through what skills their staff will need in the future will be critical. This will require them to audit the skills of their staff, identify gaps and provide training to meet them.

DO CHANGES NEED TO BE MADE TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF STAFF?

Staff report the problem of overwork whilst working remotely. Supporting staff to manage their hours is going to be crucial, particularly after a year which has led to considerable exhaustion and when high workloads look set to continue, if staff burnout is to be avoided.

PART TWO | UNION ADAPTATION

Part Two explores the impact of the pandemic on unions across six different but interacting features of their work: member engagement; recruitment and retention; training members and supporting reps; advocacy and influencing; representation of members, and union democracy and governance.

4: Member engagement

New ways of working adopted by unions during the pandemic have allowed unions, in the words of one interviewee, to "open themselves up". Many interviewees and survey respondents report that the new methods of communication and interaction adopted by their union in 2020 have substantially increased member engagement both in terms of quality and quantity. Despite restructured workplaces, remote working and social distancing measures making some traditional in-person engagement and organising methods no longer possible, participants in the research describe a sense that the bonds between members and their union have deepened in 2020 as well as a deepening of the bonds between members.

When the crisis hit, "we were there for the members" described one General Secretary. In 2020 'being there for the members' has meant unions listening to members to find out about the issues they are experiencing and the changes they want to see; creating opportunities for members to share their views and be listened to; communicating clear information, updates and advice to members, and

then using the information and feedback from members to shape the union's work to campaign, negotiate, influence to improve their lives, in and beyond the workplace.

Bringing members together: sharing, listening, organising

COVID-19 ripped up the status quo at work. To be able to respond effectively unions needed to quickly engage with their members to find out about the situations they were facing. New methods of engagement including video conferencing, all-member emails and surveys were all used to rapidly make contact with members, bring members together and listen to them. The hallmarks of this new engagement with members have been:

Hearing more from the (usually) silent majority: A union leader in a healthcare union described how the use of online meetings has allowed the union to better engage with members who wouldn't

normally come along to branch meetings in-person but who find it much easier to join and participate in online meetings.

> "There's the great majority of people who just go to work in a hospital, who want to have a union, who want to have rights and want to make improvements, but also are thinking about fifty other things before they're thinking about the union. And we have to challenge ourselves to be talking to them all the time, right?"

Listening to more members and getting better quality information: An Assistant General Secretary who represents members nationwide in the public administration sector spoke of how the pandemic has led him to engage differently with members. Through necessity, out went long-distance travel to workplace meetings and in came a new routine of several online meetings a day. They became a listening exercise with all issues that are raised, recorded and acted upon. When there are updates and new information, it is passed back to members to empower them to utilise it in local negotiations with employers. The official emails all members 3 times a week to share updates, pose questions and to encourage dialogue. Since these online activities started, there is now better quality of information from more members about the issues they are facing. This is being used to inform negotiations, campaigns and strategic planning work. Membership in these workplaces is also growing at one of the fastest rates in the union.

"This is what you're telling us. And therefore these are the issues that we are raising": Surveys were a familiar method of engagement for some unions pre-pandemic, but during 2020 some unions began to use surveys and in new ways, for example, by sending all-member surveys for the first time. As the working lives of their members changed and their priorities shifted, surveys have given unions immediate insights into what their members are concerned about and what they want their union to tackle and champion. One union leader described that large-scale survey data empowers them in negotiations as they can tell employers: *"I've got thousands of responses. And this is genuinely what is happening…. So your credibility in terms of that message with the employer is so much higher."* Another official described how:

> "The better engagement with members has strengthened our voice in the workplace and has given us a better bargaining position. For example, when one Chief Executive got to hear about how many members had attended a virtual meeting on pay, he instructed the pay team to get things sorted with speed as he didn't want pay to become a distraction to the work they needed to do."

Responding quickly to members: Greater engagement with members also enables unions to respond quickly to address concerns and provide updates. In Sweden, national pay negotiations were postponed in April 2020 for 6 months. Interviewees from Swedish unions report that in April members understood the reasons for the pause but described that by the autumn they were hearing frustration from members about the delay and calls for information about whether the 2020 agreement would include retrospective wage increases. Having heard from members, unions quickly provided reps and members with information to keep them fully informed about the state of the negotiations and their position.

DEVELOPING ANTI-RACISM STRATEGIES

Whilst responding to the pandemic has dominated the work of unions in 2020, it is important to note that it has by no means been the only issue they have worked on, and crucially, nor is COVID-19 the sole issue that members wanted to see their union take action on during 2020. In a number of unions, interviewees report that members, during the pandemic, have pushed for the union to do more to challenge racism. This has come through from engagement with members partly in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, but also due to increases in racist attacks and incidents experienced at work and because of how the pandemic has shone a light on racial discrimination and inequalities in society. Unions are now working with members to develop new anti-racism strategies.

CASE STUDY

Race Matters campaign

In June 2020 the RCM launched its 'Race Matters' campaign to tackle systemic race issues within maternity services for staff and for pregnant women in their care. The campaign was planned pre-COVID and whilst the pandemic led some work to be put on hold, in a sign of its long-term importance to the organisation a decision was taken early in the pandemic that *"even with all those other competing things Race Matters had to go ahead"*. The RCM has committed to challenge itself to do better on race issues, for example by pledging to train all RCM staff and activists to support and empower them to recognise and challenge racist behaviour and ensure the RCM at every level is representative of its members.

Upgrading and refining communication infrastructure

Effective communication and effective communication tools have proved essential for member engagement. With in-person updates in the workplaces not possible and printed materials not viable the pandemic has led to nearly all communication between unions and their members to be either digital or via the phone. This has put the spotlight on the capabilities and capacities of unions' communication infrastructures and encouraged new investment, adaptation and the development of new communication processes.

WEBINARS: A NEW ENGAGEMENT TOOL EMBRACED BY UNIONS

Online meetings to bring members have become an important part of unions' work in 2020, ranging from online branch meetings, to quickly arranged Zoom calls to provide updates on negotiations, to more structured webinars. Many unions organised webinars for their members for the first time and they are widely seen as having been a big success with high attendance and engagement from members. Webinars have usually been run to provide one-off online events that provide information or consultation with members on a single specific theme. They have both been made available to all members (for example, the NEU has seen 70,000 members join national Zoom calls with its General Secretary) and to segments of their membership (for example, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) has run regional open Q&A sessions so members can put questions to staff, as well as running targeted webinars for self-employed members). Whilst often providing information, webinars are different and separate from online training programmes (see Chapter 6).

CASE STUDY

The FDA's use of webinars

Following guidance to work from home in March, the FDA (the largest provider of face-to-face training in the civil service) realised their training would need to move online. Rather than simply replicating existing courses, the union designed a series of one-off webinars to directly address issues members were experiencing at the time. This included how to manage teams remotely and how to balance work with homeschooling. Their first webinar ran two weeks after remote working began and was attended by 350 members, a far higher number than would normally in-person training events.

Since March the union has run at least two webinars a week which members can now access online in their own time. The webinar programme has been continually refined as the pandemic has gone to ensure topics remain relevant. In recognition of the risks of overwork and burnout, the union introduced 'Switch off sessions' where members give talks that are completely unrelated to work. In 2021 webinars on new issues such as how to manage a hybrid team of office and remote workers will run. By the end of 2020 the union expected 15% of all members to have attended a webinar.

Whilst investment was required to pay for the webinar platform it is low compared to the cost of hiring rooms to put on an equivalent programme in-person.

WEBSITES

Senior interviewees from three unions discussed how new websites are being prepared to go live in 2021, with several other union leaders indicating that new websites were under active consideration. Investment in the three new in-progress websites was already planned pre-pandemic but high web traffic during the pandemic and an increasing recognition of the lost opportunities for unions if they don't have an effective online presence, both accelerated by remote working, is seen to have removed any lingering internal resistance about making investments in the union's digital infrastructure. New sites will provide improved joining facilities, access to online training and webinars as well as better integrated social media channels and member surveys, amongst other features such as a case record management system.

COVID-specific web pages and websites: To provide clear information that members, and crucially non-members, could access on demand when they needed it, unions set up COVID-specific web pages and websites. In recognition of the importance of the issue, UNISON appointed a new coordinator to centralise and oversee all of the COVID advice they were providing to members across every channel (web, emails, phone, social media) ensuring all advice went through a rigorous editorial control process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMAIL

Email remains the quickest and most effective way to share information with members. During the pandemic all unions increased the frequency of emails to all members. Many unions were sending daily all member emails in the early period of the pandemic. The frequency of emails has declined from the summer but most unions still send a weekly all-member email about COVID-19. An interviewee from a union representing key workers described how their members *"can't sit and watch the press conference from Boris Johnson. They can't watch the nightly news. So they would just pick up snippets of it and that may be even harder for them to understand what was going on. So our role increased to pass on what the government messages were, and refining them down to what they actually meant*

Developing a new email system to quickly update ASLEF members

Developing a new email system to quickly update ASLEF members: In any negotiating process communication with members to keep them informed and tell them what has been agreed is key.

During the pandemic ASLEF adapted their communication practices to keep members informed about negotiations and new agreements. The collapse in rail passenger numbers caused by the pandemic led the UK government to take direct control of running the railways. A new Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum (RCIF) was established by the government to bring together the heads of the rail operating companies, regulatory bodies, and rail unions. Any decisions made by the RCIF applied to all railway staff across the whole of

the UK, rather than just for staff working for one rail company.

ASLEF realised that because of this change in how the industry was governed they needed a new system of communication with their members to inform them quickly about what had been agreed. A senior ASLEF official explained *"we had to be a lot quicker at communicating with people because the reps didn't have their usual communication which is face to face stuff. That had all gone"*.

They established a new national bulletin system to directly send details of RCIF announcements to all members whose email address they had (75-80% of members) to quickly inform them about important new national decisions.

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to them." Whilst emails were an important way to provide members with key information during the early period of the pandemic, not all members accessed them. An interviewee from the RCM noted that whilst they sent more emails in the lockdown period they weren't getting higher open rates because their members were too busy on the frontline. This emphasised the importance of making COVID-related information available on the union's website.

ADAPTING COMMS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ANALYTICS

Through the pandemic union have adapted and refined their communications with members in other ways that have included:

- UNISON is integrating social media, particularly Facebook Messenger, into its formal communication channels in recognition of the fact that increasing numbers of members contact the union in this way.

- To support reps during the first lockdown, the NEU bought access to the online CallHub platform that enables users to make telephone calls whilst working remotely. This enabled staff from across the union to call reps to check in and find out what support they needed. Staff were given training in how to have organising conversations and a script prepared by the union's training team. 3-4000 reps were contacted before the end of May.

- Community invested in a text messaging system which they used to contact all of their members who haven't provided the union with their email address. A mass text to these members asking for an address led to 20% of the group providing one.

- Equity is undertaking a full communications review which is likely to lead to the union investing less in printed materials (e.g. magazine for members), investment to develop podcasts and a new website, but also for greater involvement for members in planning and shaping the design and content of the union's communications.

The importance of analytics and testing:
Interviewees report how they monitored web search terms to find out what members and members of the public were looking for. This was then used to develop and inform advice materials and enabled early warnings to be given to frontline advice staff about issues they might expect to be contacted about. Unions also monitored communication channels to track the issues members were raising with them and used this to inform their lobbying efforts with governments and employers and inform their negotiations with employers. Where new issues were beginning to be picked up in phone calls with members, one union then included questions about them in member surveys to identify how widespread the issue was. Unions have also monitored their email analytics to improve engagement. Community identified that they were getting very high open rates and engagement with their emails from self-employed members. This encouraged them to send more emails to this group knowing that they would tend to be read.

Providing advice and guidance

Throughout the pandemic, but especially during the first lockdown, members have turned to unions for information, advice and guidance. In the spring as contact from members soared, unions had to quickly produce new advice, interpret government guidance and respond to record email and telephone demand. Multiple unions reported having to put extra staff into communications and advice teams to meet member demand. This included staff informally helping out when they could, formal secondments and former staff returning to work. Unions report demand dropping off over the summer but rising again as concerns about a second wave increased which suggests that unions may need to build in flexibility to their structures to be able to ramp up and down member support as required. With staff working remotely, it has been essential to bring staff providing advice together online to ensure consistent advice is being given and to allow staff to 'decompress' and share experiences about the emotionally draining work of supporting members in distress.

Many interviewees report how staff from across different parts of the union worked together, often for the first time, at speed and remotely to pool their expertise to produce clear guidance for their members and service users. In the RCM new cross-cutting teams were formed who would meet 2-3 times a week to produce new guidance that would quickly be published on the college's website and issued to members. On issues such as occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women at least a dozen iterations of the guidance were developed as the situation changed over a short period of time.

KEY FINDINGS

- New forms of online communication enable unions to engage with more members.

- Online meetings and webinars have been embraced by unions during 2020.

- More and better quality information from members through enhanced engagement allows unions to better represent members and strengthens their hand with employers.

- Unions are investing to upgrade, adapt and refine their communications infrastructure. The pandemic has shown the need for unions to have effective communication tools.

- Large numbers of members have turned to unions for advice and guidance through the pandemic.

- Unions need to ensure they have sufficient analytical capacity to process the greater amounts of information that members can now share with unions.

Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

"I have to say this thing I'm most proud of is how we have opened ourselves up much more as a union and facilitated our members getting together online."

This quote, from an interviewee with a senior union leader, is emblematic of a trend that can be observed across unions. The new conditions created by the pandemic created an opportunity for unions to have more engagement with members, to enable members' voices to be heard more loudly, and crucially, for engagement with more members. Online forms of engagement, most obviously meetings held on video conferencing platforms, have been widely adopted and as the testimony shared in this chapter, and throughout the report, illustrates it is a form of engagement that looks set to become a permanent feature of unions' work. One leader outlined their vision to now *embed in practice the principle of engaging as many members as possible as often as possible*.

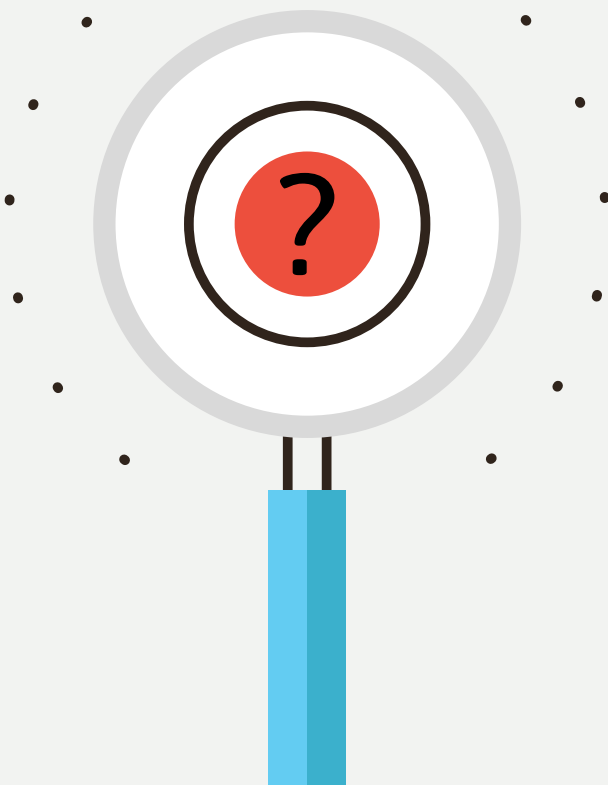## CAN UNIONS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INCREASED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT? IF SO, HOW?

The engagement methods explored in this chapter – online meetings and webinars, effective communications to members and the provision of advice and guidance – whilst looked at separately here should all be seen as part of a whole. Effective engagement with members comes from making sure each part connects to each other, all underpinned by the voices of members. To maximise their effectiveness, unions need to invest to make sure they have sufficient analytical capacity to process the greater amount of information from members that they can now access, and then ensure that the information can be shared widely with staff, reps and crucially back to members. Interviewees describe how changes made during 2020 mean the union has the potential to be guided by members more so than in the past. Learning from what has worked in 2020 and thinking about how engagement methods could be improved will be a key challenge for unions as they plan ahead.

CAN GREATER MEMBER ENGAGEMENT CHANGE ORGANISING APPROACHES?

One senior leader explained that their union's use of online meetings and online engagement tools has shifted how they are thinking about organising having seen the new potential for greater and deeper levels of engagement.

"We're not just meeting 20 people once a quarter in a room. We can consult with a hundred interested people or a thousand interested people just before we start doing something, as we're doing something and then afterwards ...we might still use the 20 people who we were getting together, we're not replacing them or getting rid of them, but they'll be the people who are coordinating that."

New tools means new possibilities for unions have opened up. Thinking through how greater member engagement could change their approach to organising (and how in turn that could lead to even greater member engagement) will now be a key question for unions to consider.

5: Member recruitment and retention

As the pandemic hit, it appeared to present an immediate and major threat to the level of union membership. With workers facing severe hardship as workplaces closed many participants in this research reported that they feared a swift decline in membership. However, evidence suggests that these fears were misplaced, at least initially, with large numbers of joining, particularly in the early months of the pandemic. Official membership statistics for 2020 have yet to be released but most participants in the research expect membership in their union to have increased since the start of the pandemic, with some anticipating large increases. The National Education Union, for example, has seen 50,000 new members join since March; a net year-on-year increase of 20,000 members.

Participants in the research attribute this anticipated membership growth during the pandemic to two main factors: 1) people joining to receive immediate protection, support and advice about new threats to their employment and health arising from COVID-19 and 2) people joining when they saw unions prominently defending their members' interests. With traditional recruitment activities built around in-person contact with potential new members in work and education settings unable to take place, unions have adapted to develop new recruitment methods and campaigns and make changes to their membership systems and processes. Before the pandemic, nearly all new members already joined online, now participants in the research suggest that close to 100% of new members join online.

Recruitment during the pandemic

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Many interviewees and survey respondents reported that new members have joined when they have seen the union campaigning to defend its members and providing members with advice and guidance:

"Lots of people have joined because they have been impressed by the role the union has played in fighting for the industry."

"More new members joining on-line, particularly after we've issued a COVID-19 update and they hear about it from colleagues."

In a transformed work environment when many reps' contact to members is limited and with many people working remotely, the importance of unions being visible in the media and providing members and non-members with regular updates has become apparent. This is illustrated by the work of the FDA which breached its overall record membership in 2020. Its staff report that membership has increased where the union has been visible in dealing with high-profile workplace issues in the civil service such as the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, but particularly that membership has increased due to union leaders being prominent in the media when civil servants have come under political attack. After each incident senior leaders from the FDA appeared in the media to defend their members and each time this led to a spike in membership. Moreover, each spike got progressively bigger, highlighting that whilst people may not join the union straight away they are more likely to do so

when they see a pattern of the union consistently defending its members and a pattern of behaviour from their employer.

ONLINE JOINING

Nearly all new members joining during the pandemic have joined online which was an acceleration of an existing trend. This has highlighted the need for unions to have efficient online membership systems and put strain on existing systems, particularly where there have been significant spikes in membership. One survey respondent from a small union explained that:

"The membership team currently has a backlog of circa 2000 membership applications. This is because there has been a higher than expected number of new membership applications. Further, some data-related activities can only be done at the head office, and due to social distancing measures, only 1 colleague can be in the office at a time to do this (normally there are 3 staff working in this office in the membership team)."

This has led to unions recognising the need to invest in their membership systems and to fully integrate it into new and upgraded websites to, as one General Secretary put it, provide *"a slicker online join process"*. Fórsa union launched an online membership system during 2020 which staff report has worked well despite the system crashing at times; a reminder that overhauling membership systems and databases takes time but is an essential investment.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT

A key cornerstone of recruitment for professional focused unions is student membership. This has proved difficult despite adaptation. Union staff who

have participated in virtual training and recruitment events for students report that they have gone well and that whilst they have, to date, led to fewer sign-ups than would normally be expected, they are important activities because they provide the opportunity to make a new student cohort aware of the benefits of membership.

Health unions acted swiftly during the pandemic to provide membership to over 25,000 student nurses, midwives, doctors, pharmacists and medical students who enrolled to work in the NHS. The CSP quickly introduced a new category of membership that is initially free for people entering the workforce temporarily (this included students but also retirees returning to work). The CSP also used this as an opportunity to make a change to their membership fee structure and remove a barrier to joining by scrapping up-front joining fees and moving to a monthly payment system.

Other examples of new approaches and processes to recruit members include:

- As part of UNISON's work to develop its new health and safety tool for members, they developed a system that plugged into the union's membership system to automatically check if somebody using the tool was a member. This system is now also being used to integrate a membership check into the registration process for the union's webinars. Whilst some webinars are open to all, this allows the union to follow up with non-members who seek to attend member-only events to encourage them to join the union.

- In Sweden, Vision ran a telemarketing campaign to contact potential new members and took out adverts in newspapers and magazines.

- Community is experimenting with social media adverts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Young workers have been targeted on Instagram with ads that don't make a direct appeal to join the union but aim to raise awareness about the union and encourage users to follow the union's account. A competition to win an iPad led to a healthy bump in followers and it is hoped this will lead to new members.

Retention

Due to the dire economic forecasts for many industries, participants in the research report fearing membership decline in 2021 despite growth in 2020. Just as the economic and health risks of COVID-19 have led people to join unions, those same risks are already causing people to leave professions and surrender their union membership. An interviewee from a US union organising health and social care workers outlined that their total number of members at the end of the year will be significantly down. This is partly because of workplaces closing but also because they think *"some people are just leaving healthcare all together because it's too damn frightening"*. Interviewees reported that they expect their union will need to do more work to retain members in 2021. There are a number of good retention practices from the last year that unions can draw on, none of which are new but all highlight the value and benefits of traditional retention work.

- During the pandemic, the Musicians Union established a hardship fund open to all members which enabled members in financial hardship to apply for grants of £200. The union also introduced a six months subscription holiday for members, available on request, which was extended by a further three months in October 2020. Interviewees from the MU reported that these measures have been successful in retaining members but acknowledged that the end of the subscription holiday could create a cliff-edge of members leaving if they are still in hardship.

- Accord has focused on retention with efforts made to follow up with every member who resigns the union.

- Finally, old-fashioned hitting the phones can pay dividends. An interviewee from the ACTU reported that several Australian unions report membership rises which are purely attributed to retention work. Reps and staff who found themselves with more time due to other work having to be cancelled decided to work through a list of ex-members who had resigned leading to a healthy number rejoining.

KEY FINDINGS

- Unions report that membership has increased since the start of the pandemic with some unions set to achieve big annual increases.

- Growth is attributed to new members joining to receive the protection that membership provides and because unions have been visible during the pandemic in defending their members' interests.

- But research participants suggest that the picture varies by sector, with some areas already experiencing declines in membership.

- There are widespread fears of members leaving in the coming months as job losses are forecast, particularly in the private sector, and as furlough and government support measures for hard-hit industries and groups of workers are set to end.

- To prevent membership declining, unions may need to consider their membership fees and practices and put renewed emphasis on retention initiatives.

Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

This chapter has shown how unions have gained and retained members since the start of the pandemic. Looking ahead, new challenges around recruitment and retention are likely to be faced raising questions for unions to consider (especially for unions where subscription provides a high percentage of their income). These include:

WILL ACCESS TO WORKPLACES CHANGE AND COULD THIS AFFECT RECRUITMENT?

Unions have demonstrated that virtual recruitment events in workplaces can be effective in recruiting members and have positive benefits for staff and reps' time. However, interviewees raised concerns that this will not have gone unnoticed by some employers who may use it as a reason not to allow union organisers into workplaces. After a year of strict limits being placed on who can access workplaces, interviewees also noted that attitudes towards trade union access to workplaces may have hardened and that safety concerns could be used as a reason for continuing to want access to workers to be conducted remotely even if it is safe to hold in-person events. It should be noted that, as yet, no evidence of this taking place was provided but it was noted as a plausible threat to future recruitment activities, particularly in workplaces with low density and without recognition agreements.

HOW MUCH FOCUS SHOULD BE PUT ON IN-PERSON RECRUITMENT WORK?

When more workplaces reopen and social distancing is relaxed, should unions invest money and staff time on physical recruitment activities (for example, paying for stalls at conferences)? Participants raised this question as something that their union ought to consider. They note the value of being visible and raising awareness about the union but caution about the need for union resources to be used as efficiently as possible.

HOW SHOULD UNIONS RESPOND TO A GROWING MEMBERSHIP NOT COVERED BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS?

Several participants noted the growth during the pandemic of 'single member workplaces', alongside continued growth in freelance and self-employed members. Whilst new 'singleton' members are welcomed, these members are highlighted because they raise questions about what a unions' 'offer' to those members is and how best to engage with them. A traditional offer of being able to negotiate pay and conditions doesn't apply to most members in this category and so participants note that new ways need to be found to engage with them and build collective power and agency.

ARE EXISTING SUBSCRIPTION RATES AND MODELS FIT FOR PURPOSE?

The hardship being faced by some unions' members and concerns about potential membership decline in the future is encouraging debate in unions about their subscription rates and models.

- A senior interviewee from a union with comparably low subscription rates and with many members in financial hardship noted that they may need to make some tough decisions about increasing rates to *"make us stronger for the future and able to survive as an independent union."*

- Another union, representing workers in the creative industries, requires people who join the union having previously been a member to pay 12 months membership up front. During the pandemic this rule was dropped and officials from that union shared that they question the viability of bringing this rule back in, recognising the hardship that many people in their sector are in. Scrapping this on a permanent basis or moving to a more flexible arrangement would have cost implications for the union, however the trade off is that reintroducing the fee could see some potential members choosing not to join in a context when many are in real financial hardship.

SHOULD UNIONS PROVIDE INCOME INSURANCE?

In countries where unions provide income insurance a growth in membership can be two-edged. Unions in Sweden that were spoken to during this project report positive membership growth in 2020, a reversal of declining membership in recent years, which is attributed to a recognition of the protection unions provide. However, they note that this means the union carries greater risk on their balance sheet and needs to be closely monitored (a challenge that particularly faces unions representing members in sectors where incomes are higher).

HOW REPRESENTATIVE ARE UNIONS?

Research shows that women, young people, and BAME workers have disproportionately been hard hit by the pandemic, and that women have shouldered the burden of additional caring responsibilities during the pandemic. Unions should monitor their membership patterns to assess what impact this is having on recruitment and retention and if changes to the demographics of its membership base can be observed. Putting in place measures to address any changes will be important to make sure that the hardest hit groups of workers in the labour market are not falling out of the union movement and see union membership as relevant to improving their conditions at work and future careers.

6: Training members and supporting reps

Lay reps are the face and engine room of unions in the workplace. They recruit members, organise local campaigning, negotiate with employers, take up casework on behalf of members, organise local meetings and act as a crucial two-way source and channel of information between members and regional and head offices. In a new situation where reps have had to limit in-person contact with members and colleagues and many have worked remotely, for all or some of the last year, how reps do their work has had to change during the pandemic. As such, unions have needed to provide support and training to reps in new ways, as this chapter outlines. It also details how changes brought about by COVID-19 have led large numbers of members to step forward to become reps in their workplaces.

Training and recruiting reps

The pandemic has led large numbers of members to come forward and volunteer to become reps for the first time. In particular, recruitment of new Health and Safety reps has significantly increased. Interviewees attribute the overall increase in reps to two main factors 1) an urgent awareness caused by the pandemic about the risks to health at work and a desire to protect themselves and colleagues from those risks, and 2) the sense that the pandemic had made members aware of inequities and injustices at work that they want to play a role in addressing through their union. Interviewees indicate that new reps that have been recruited through the pandemic tend to be younger and more diverse than their union's existing base of reps. A senior organiser from a union that represents health care professionals explained that a new cohort of young reps who had worked through the pandemic were becoming active because they had seen that *"we should never be in a position where our health care professionals feel so vulnerable … we should never be in that place again"*; a strong sense of wanting change is also reported by organisers from other unions who have worked with and trained new reps.

CASE STUDY

Increasing the diversity of Health and Safety reps:

In 2019 UNISON's annual conference passed a motion for the union to run a campaign to recruit new health and safety reps. Work on the initiative began early in 2020 but as awareness about COVID-19 grew during February the campaign took on new urgency and became a far higher priority within the union. With a majority of UNISON's members being frontline workers the union started to see members from workplaces like schools and social care settings coming forward during this period to sign up as health and safety reps. Health and safety had suddenly become an issue that wasn't just seen as *"trips and slips"* but was about *"keeping your colleagues safe, keeping yourself safe, and it had such a much more immediate and direct appeal"* in a pandemic. The members coming forward included far more women and black members than would normally sign up as health and safety reps, who typically are older white men despite women making up around 70% of UNISON's members. As such when the union came to promote the campaign they made the voices and faces of new reps prominent to show the diversity of members who had signed up and to emphasise that health and safety was an issue for all members in all workplaces. Launched around the time that the UK went into lockdown, the campaign is described by an official involved in the campaign as *"our most successful rep recruitment campaign and I think the one where we've broken out the box more"*.

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Developing new online training offers

Before spring 2020, the training offer provided by nearly all unions was built around in-person courses that often took place over several days in a residential environment. Interviewees that have been involved in designing and providing their union's training during the pandemic explained that they quickly realised they couldn't simply move existing courses online but that courses would need to be rethought, rewritten and broken down into shorter length sessions. Online training was for many union educators a new experience but the urgency of the situation meant there was little time to trial new courses as would normally be expected.

"I think it would have taken over two years to build confidence and pilot that through our structures had it not been for COVID. The fact we had to shut everything down meant we just had to do it. An electric shock to the system is actually a benefit."

A number of trends and lessons emerge from interviews with union educators and union leaders about the shift to online learning:

RESISTANCE TO ONLINE LEARNING HAS BROKEN DOWN

Union educators and senior union officials share the view that the pandemic has shown unions that online learning can work and that there is high demand and participation from members when it is provided. This is seen as breaking down any internal resistance for online training being part of their learning offer that may have existed pre-pandemic.

ONLINE TRAINING ALLOWS FOR CUMULATIVE LEARNING AND IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION

Interviewees highlighted the positive effects gained from breaking down courses that were previously run over consecutive days into multi-part courses spread over a longer period. Interviewees reported how this has changed the learning experience as reps can now be asked at the end of each session to take specific actions in the workplace before the next session. Learners can then share their experiences in the next session. This not only leads to reps immediately putting their training into action in the workplace but it leads to a process of cumulative learning. Reps engaged in this kind of learning now have more opportunity to discuss their work with trainers and other reps on the course, to get feedback on the actions they have taken and to learn from others.

ONLINE LEARNING IS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND A MORE EFFICIENT USE OF TIME

Educators agree that members with caring responsibilities are more able to attend training that is delivered online in shorter, bitesize blocks (e.g. 1-3 hours) compared to all-day or multi-day residential courses which can often involve long-distance travel to attend. Some interviewees also noted that online training enabled a more efficient use of facilities time for their reps. However, one educator noted that they had observed a preference from some reps for online training to be provided outside of working hours. This is attributed to members finding it easier to join from home and due to them not wanting to disrupt their working days. Their union is wary about this due to concerns that facilities time, if provided, could be lost if it is not utilised and also to protect the right of reps to be able to access training during work hours.

THE LOSS OF INFORMAL LEARNING

Educators highlight the loss of informal peer-to-peer learning when training moves from the physical classroom to online sessions. Informal discussion and conversation between learners is an essential part of union learning as well as an important opportunity for members to make new connections with other members. To reinstate this part of the learning process to their training, unions now plan to provide courses that combine on and offline elements. However, there are exceptions. The NEU gives all reps access to an online support system called Mobilise where they can speak to each other and access peer-to-peer support.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION AND QUALITY CONTROL

Union educators stress the importance of collaboration amongst education teams so that redesigning and pedagogically rethinking courses is a shared exercise; an essential process for the development of standard operating procedures and to ensure quality control across courses. One training manager explained that this process needs to address questions such: what platform is best for online courses as opposed to one-off webinars? What teams and skills do you need to design online training? What technical support is needed? How do learning exercises and assessments change with online provision? During the pandemic unions had to redesign training at speed and experimented with new formats and approaches. As they now consider what their longer-term training offer is, these questions will be essential for union educators to consider alongside evaluation of what has worked well to date.

The two case studies below illustrate some of the new ways in which training has been provided online by union educators during 2020.

CASE STUDIES

New courses, large numbers of learners

During the pandemic the National Education Union recruited 3500 new reps which meant between March-October 2020 the density of schools with an NEU rep increased from 28% to 41%. 57% of NEU members now have access to a workplace rep. The union set a target of giving a briefing to new reps within 4 weeks of them signing up. A new induction short course comprising two 90 minute sessions was written and delivered using Zoom (for which the union invested in 150 licenses for staff). 3500 members took part in online training between March-July. In a normal year the union would provide face-to-face training to 2200 members. Demand for health and safety training also spiked. With schools closed during the first lockdown many members were concerned about their safe reopening. New health and safety courses were quickly written which aimed to get all learners (both new health and safety reps and existing reps and officers) to complete COVID risk assessments for their schools prior to re-opening. The union did no targeted marketing beyond an all-member email and sharing details on their website. For a period in the spring before schools reopened trainers ran 3 courses a day, 5 days a week. On the day the government asked schools to reopen only one-third did, with many needing longer to put safety measures in place after NEU reps had completed risk assessments.

Establishing a new online Education Hub

Prior to COVID-19 the Pharmacists Defence Association was developing plans for a new online Education Hub; a key element of meeting the union's aim to support their members' career development. In the early weeks of the pandemic, the PDA's directors backed a proposal to press ahead with the Education Hub and made a large investment enabling the union to access a learning system called Canvas. The pandemic strengthened the case for investment and accelerated the Hub's development. As COVID hit the UK, trainee pharmacists were given provisional registration allowing them to enter the profession before completing their training. The PDA recognised the urgent need to support trainee members, described as *"the most vulnerable in the profession"*, before they returned to sit final exams. A project team built the Hub and designed a curriculum in 8 weeks; a process that would normally take between "eight to eighteen months". The first programme for trainees covered topics such as how to work in teams and how to be a professional in the workplace, as well as providing revision courses. Over 500 members took part with positive feedback from learners. The union is now seeing rising interest (attributed to word of mouth sharing between members) and courses are being developed for new and experienced reps.

Supporting reps

During the pandemic many workplace reps, both new and established, have had to respond to a higher level of contact from members and have needed to perform their roles in new ways. Interviewees and survey respondents cannot praise the work of reps highly enough, but it is noted that some established reps have at times struggled in new situations where they have either had to work remotely from their members or where social distancing has severely restricted in-person engagement with members and colleagues in the workplace. In recognition of the new challenges facing reps, particularly the inability to easily meet in-person, support has needed to be provided in different ways and new ways found to help reps support each other through peer-to-peer networks.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONE CALLS

Interviewees and survey respondents highlight the importance of phone calls to support reps. Many note that there has been a tendency for conversations that would previously have taken place on the phone to now take place through a video call. To guard against 'Zoom fatigue' one organiser described how he makes a point of calling reps in his patch each week on the phone, an approach that he considered to be beneficial for reps and himself. In the early period of the pandemic, the CSP hit the phones and launched an internal initiative called 'Love Calls' (a name and idea they took from their counterpart organisation in Denmark) where regional officers would simply call round their reps to check in and find out if they were doing ok. Regional offices now bring reps together on Zoom calls but still also prioritise one-to-one calls to replace the informal conversations that could normally take place at the sides or end of in-person meetings, and so that any issues can be picked up and addressed swiftly.

SURVEYING REPS

Prospect sent a survey to all of their reps to ask how they had communicated with members during lockdown. This identified that support and training was needed to help reps to welcome new joiners, to recruit new members online, to move AGMs online and with how to replace spontaneous office chats.

WHATSAPP GROUPS

In a lot of unions the use of WhatsApp groups have significantly expanded to keep reps in touch with each other and with union officials. New groups have been set up and already existing groups are being used more frequently. Groups are used to quickly share information and guidance, to ask questions and get advice, and also to maintain informal workplace-like chitchat. A number of senior union officials described how they are in WhatsApp groups with reps and monitor conversations so that they can jump in quickly to provide advice and support if and when their input is needed.

WHAT'S UP?

The Swedish union Vision has set up a new online initiative called 'What's Up?' where every rep is invited to an online meeting with the President of the union. The meetings have been established to provide reps with an opportunity to share with her, but also with reps from across the union, what's happening in their workplace, what issues members are wanting support with, and crucially what support they need as reps. It is hoped that from these meetings reps will make connections with each other to build individual and group peer-to-peer relationships.

KEY FINDINGS

- The pandemic has led large numbers of members to come forward to become reps.

- Recruitment of new Health and Safety reps has significantly increased.

- Unions have needed to develop new training offers for reps. Training has taken place online and unions have seen high demand for online courses.

- Online training provision has created an opportunity for unions to rethink their training offer. Future training is likely to blend on and online elements.

- Reps have faced a higher workload during the pandemic and many have had reduced contact with their members.

- Unions have needed to find new ways to support reps during the pandemic.

Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

The pandemic has led thousands of members to get more involved in their union and become reps. They will continue to need support – both informal and pastoral, and through formal training. Debates have now begun in some unions about how best to support reps over the long term and about their future provision of online learning. One union leader explained that historically they provide their reps with basic training but then largely leave them alone. Their union's adoption of online training during 2020 is now leading them to rethink their whole training offer and interrogate their engagement with reps. They now plan to be more analytical and systematic by extending a performance management system to reps. This will help the union to assess the outcomes of the work that reps do but also provide reps with bespoke skills development opportunities tailored to their

needs and areas of expertise. Other questions for unions to consider include:

WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM PLAN FOR ONLINE TRAINING?

Unions that moved quickly to provide online training during the pandemic have seen high demand and have seen how redesigned courses can lead to reps quickly putting their training into practice. As unions move to integrate online training more fully in their training offer there needs to be a process of reflection and evaluation to assess what has worked well in 2020.

WILL NEW COURSES NEED TO BE DEVELOPED?

A senior training manager put their union's success with online training down to providing the right training offer, at the right time, when their members needed it. The pandemic required new courses to be quickly designed and existing courses rewritten. As the pandemic continues and new issues emerge, do unions have the capacity to continue to adapt to the changing circumstances their members face?
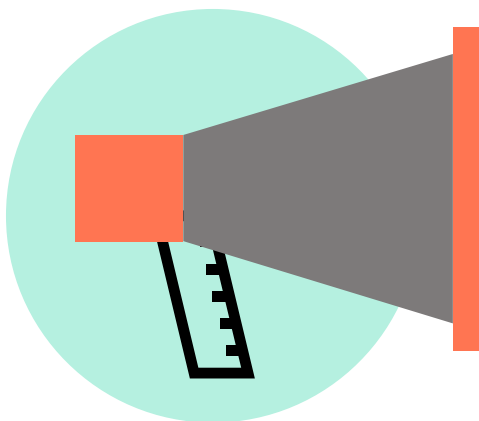
THE FUTURE OF UNIONLEARN – WHAT COMES NEXT?

The UK government has announced its intention to scrap the Union Learning Fund from March 2021. Last year more than 200,000 learners got new skills through union learning. If the government ignores unions' calls to reverse the planned cut, many unions' ability to provide learning will be significantly impacted.

7: Advocacy and influencing

The chapters so far demonstrate the interconnectedness of the different strands of a union's work. Member engagement drives recruitment, which can lead to new reps being recruited, who in turn can build collective power in workplaces that can secure wins for members and vice versa. An organising model is dynamic with each part reinforcing each other. As such it may seem odd to some to separate out advocacy and influencing into its own chapter, however during the pandemic unions have innovated to find new ways of advocating for and with their members. They have used new opportunities presented by the pandemic to influence key decision makers and help shape the terms of public debates. This has led to new forms of activism, lobbying and partnership working creating positive outcomes for their members. This chapter presents new campaign case studies and reflections on unions' advocacy and influencing work during the pandemic.

Campaigning in a pandemic

Mass rallies, protests, demonstrations and in-person lobbies of politicians and employers have, with some exceptions, largely stopped and been replaced with online forms of campaigning. As the examples below demonstrate, throughout the pandemic unions have run campaigns on behalf of and with their members in new, innovative and effective ways and on new issues.

BLENDED APPROACHES

The crisis in the aviation industry caused by COVID-19 led the Dutch confederation FNV to mount a large-scale organising campaign at Amsterdam Schiphol airport which involved:

- Online petitions calling for PPE and fair working conditions including the Living Wage for all airport workers.

- Targeted Facebook Ads to push the petitions to the airport's 68,000 workers.

- Online meetings on Zoom which were attended by hundreds of members at which the Chief Executive of the Airport was invited to receive the petition and listen to members. This led to an announcement being made just after the meeting that PPE would be provided. Politicians and journalists were also invited by the FNV to attend the online event.

- A first-of-its-kind drive-in rally in an airport car park which was attended by around 100 members in their cars. This attracted widespread news coverage helping to put the spotlight on the union's demands.

Through the campaign, which has now involved five separate petitions and the continued use

of online meetings, new organising leads have been identified and followed up. This has led to new leaders emerging from within the union's membership and to 2000 new members being recruited. The FNV Schiphol campaign leaders see their future campaigning continuing to take a blended approach to maximise the effectiveness of traditional offline organising and new online methods which have given them *"new weapons in their arsenal"*. Within the FNV the Schiphol campaign team have broken new ground and shown how to organise successfully during the pandemic by combining innovative on and offline campaigning tools and tactics.

VIRTUAL LOBBYING

SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania has organised virtual lobbies of state legislators to replace the in-person lobbies they would normally organise. A senior leader from the US union explained that virtual lobbies are set to be retained post-pandemic because higher number of members have taken part compared to in-person lobbies; they are quicker, cheaper and easier to organise, and crucially because politicians who have been lobbied in this way have acted on the testimony shared with them by members.

SOCIALLY DISTANCED RALLIES

In September 2020 BECTU, Equity and other creative industries campaign groups organised 'The Panto Parade' which saw pantomime dames and creative workers march, socially distanced, through London before rallying at Parliament. The event, which secured widespread media coverage, raised awareness about the hardship being experienced by workers in the theatre and live events industry. Equity, like many other unions, have also used online e-lobbying campaigns to mobilise their members to write to their MPs and ministers. The union is now investing in new online lobbying software to better mobilise their *"reserve lobbying army"*.

USING THE PANDEMIC TO GIVE FRESH ENERGY TO CAMPAIGNS

The hardship experienced by members of the Musicians Union due to the loss of income from live music gave the union fresh impetus for it's 'Fix Streaming' campaign which highlights how online streaming royalties for musicians are woefully insufficient. The union was already campaigning on the issue pre-pandemic but the hardship being experienced by members gave it much sharper focus. The union ran an effective online lobbying campaign that attracted support from high-profile musicians and has led the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee to announce a parliamentary inquiry into the economics of music streaming.

Media in campaigns

Union experiences of engaging with the press during the pandemic have highlighted the range of mutually reinforcing benefits that media engagement can have for unions including driving up recruitment of members and reps. Proactive media work by unions during the pandemic has shown how unions can also raise public and political awareness about new issues affecting their members, for example unions' work to highlight the chronic shortages of PPE for health and social care workers and other key workers in the first weeks and months of the pandemic. Another example comes from Finansförbundet, the Swedish financial

sector union. The union surveyed its members about home working and found that many members wanted to be able to work from home but were unable to do so. After sharing the findings with the media and securing press coverage, the Swedish Minister for Labour called on employers to give more employees the right to work at home citing the union's findings as evidence.

Unions report how the pandemic has led to far greater demand from the media for expert opinion about working conditions, with an increase in media requests to unions to discuss both specific and general issues about working conditions. For example, an interviewee from a union communication team described how their union has been asked to speak about the PPE crisis even when this wasn't an issue affecting their members as acutely in other sectors. Nonetheless by responding positively and quickly the union was able to use the opportunity to raise the union's profile and promote the issues affecting their members. This contributes to union leaders becoming seen as trusted and expert sources of information about their sectors and the wider world of work more broadly. In recognition of the benefits that media engagement for their union has provided during the pandemic, a range of interviewees reported that their union is now investing in its public relations teams by hiring new staff to give them greater capacity for proactive media engagement.

Political engagement and lobbying

The pandemic opened up new opportunities for unions to engage more extensively with government ministers and officials in all four nations than before the pandemic. Unions acted quickly to take this opportunity and through greater engagement with government they secured significant wins for workers including the introduction of economic support measures, workplace safety guidelines and improved clinical practice in the NHS, as well as pressing members' concerns directly with decision makers. Interviews with senior leaders who have been part of this work shared a range of important reflections about political engagement and lobbying during the pandemic:

UNDERSTANDING THE SECTOR LEADS TO BETTER POLICY

As noted in Chapter 2, the TUC played a critical role in persuading the Treasury to introduce the furlough scheme and in the design of the scheme. When the details of the furlough scheme were announced, creative unions such as Equity and BECTU quickly realised that it would only benefit a small number of their members as most are not employees but have freelance and portfolio careers. They, along with other unions representing workers in the creative industries, lobbied the UK government to introduce support for self-employed workers which led to the Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) being established. This was only possible because unions responded quickly at critical moments and because they were able to provide government with detailed information about the support that was required.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Interviewees from health unions shed light on how their unions had extensive engagement with Ministers and NHS leaders in the spring as the pandemic hit. Several reported that the whole of the healthcare system came together and that amidst a sense of being in a national crisis, their union, and all health unions, acted as a constructive partner to provide advice and support to the NHS. Interviewees report that their union took the view that, at that stage in the pandemic, it was better to privately influence than publicly campaign. For example, where clinical guidance didn't reflect their members' experiences, unions engaged in extensive behind the scenes influencing work and secured changes. Unions' ability to influence decision making and support their members was aided by the NHS moving to a national 'command and control' structure for England which meant decisions could be implemented quickly. By working closely with politicians and officials, unions took this opportunity to push for and quickly secure changes to support members, including making working conditions more tolerable for their members who were doing extremely long shifts such as the provision of hot meals and free car parking.

Government willingness to engage has cooled: As the pandemic has gone on interviewees report that whilst their union's interactions with governments remain more frequent than before March 2020, the government's willingness to make changes that unions call for and to engage collaboratively with unions has significantly cooled.

"Earlier in the year there was loads and loads of engagement with the Treasury because there was that kind of goodwill to try and see what could be done. That has fallen away as the government's position has hardened and that's made lobbying efforts harder and harder."

This hardening within government has led health unions to shift their approach to become much more publicly vocal with their criticisms about the conditions facing their members and about the government's handling of the pandemic. The Royal Colleges of Midwives (RCM) launched a campaign in autumn 2020 calling on the government to deliver a decent pay deal for midwives. The RCM's campaign calls on the government to reward staff for their efforts during the pandemic with a decent pay deal and to address the acute midwifery shortages in the NHS. The campaign is just one example, from many, that reflects how the demands unions are now putting to government combine demands that relate to the new COVID-created conditions their members are working in with long-standing demands such as the need for greater investment to tackle staff shortages.

QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS KEY

Interviewees report that the crisis has provided an opportunity for some senior union leaders to establish strong working relationships with ministers and officials, resulting in a greater confidence on unions' ability to be able to influence political decision making than before the pandemic. For example, one UK government department has regularly convened meetings with unions to discuss the impact on specific sectors. However, other interviewees warned of the risk of the government engaging in 'tickbox consultation' when unions are called in (virtually), asked for their views, but that the meetings offer limited genuine dialogue nor result in any action or positive outcomes. One senior leader, who has participated in meetings with government during the pandemic, observed that whilst there may be more interaction with politicians, *"the metric isn't really how many meetings have you had, it's what difference has it made?"*

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIONS

Several unions observed that COVID-19 has significantly widened the breadth of issues where they want to see policy changes made by the UK's governments. In recognition of this one union has hired an additional parliamentary liaison officer to increase their capacity for political engagement and lobbying. Yet, another interviewee stated that political engagement work has become easier and more efficient through the use of video conferencing: *"I'm not spending a morning walking down into Westminster from the office to just have a cup of tea with an MP to get them to put down a parliamentary question for me. I can do that in 20 minutes on a zoom call."*

KEY FINDINGS

- Unions have shown how to successfully campaign online, and how to successfully combine on and offline campaign tactics.

- Engagement with government has increased and unions have used this to secure change for their members, however government cooperation has cooled since the early period of the pandemic.

- Greater media attention on working conditions during the pandemic created new opportunities for unions to advocate for their members.

- 2020 has, through necessity, been a year of unions acting reactively. Looking ahead unions face the challenge of how to combine being reactive whilst also influencing and raising awareness about their long-term strategic priorities.

Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

Throughout 2020 unions acted quickly to campaign, lobby and advocate for and with their members as the pandemic turned the world of work upside down. 2020 was a year of unions being reactive. Many participants in the research, from reps to General Secretaries, highlighted that a year of firefighting and acting quickly not only places great strain on staff and reps but also risks the union being diverted away from its longer term strategic priorities. In the coming year many expressed the hope that a balance of being both reactive and proactive could be struck, but acknowledged the severe difficulties of being able to plan effectively in the highly uncertain context of a pandemic. This is the key challenge that unions will face when it comes to planning their future campaigns, advocacy and influencing work and determining how to allocate resources to them. The need for strategic planning is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10.

But as future campaigns, advocacy and influencing work are planned there is much for unions to learn from in 2020, a year when new methods of campaigning to blend on and offline activity has been developed, and when political engagement has secured significant gains for members. As unions reflect on 2020 to help plan their proactive advocacy and influencing work in 2021 and beyond key questions to consider include:

HOW SHOULD UNIONS CONTINUE TO ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT?

Going forward, unions need to take advantage of existing organisational structures and governmental bodies to best represent their members. Being proactive in lobbying for positions and even for the creation of bodies which can help to expand and strengthen social dialogue.

WHERE IS COLLABORATION NEEDED BETWEEN UNIONS TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL DEBATES, AND WHEN ARE UNIONS BETTER POSITIONED TO TAKE FORWARD ISSUES INDEPENDENTLY?

Unions have worked well in formal and informal settings to influence government policy and employer negotiations. Moving forward, unions need to consider how they can take advantage of these new coalitions and ways of working to best influence debate and decision making.

ARE ANY NEW INVESTMENTS IN STAFF AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO MAXIMISE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNION'S ADVOCACY, INFLUENCING AND CAMPAIGNING WORK?

Several unions observed that COVID-19 has significantly widened the breadth of issues where they want to see policy changes made by the UK's governments. In recognition of this one union has hired an additional parliamentary liaison officer to increase their capacity for political engagement and lobbying.

8: Representation of members

While the arrival of COVID-19 transformed working life and required unions to quickly deal with a whole new set of issues, all of the issues that members were facing before the pandemic did not go away. This chapter considers how unions have represented members during the pandemic; the part of unions' work that perhaps best demonstrates how the new reality created by COVID-19 came crashing into the world of work in early 2020. It looks at collective representation through negotiations with employers and the issues that have been negotiated, and how unions have provided representation to individual members.

A changed context for negotiations with employers

From the outset of the pandemic, the context of negotiations with employers quickly changed. New issues that COVID put on the table needed swift action and there are countless examples of new COVID-related agreements that unions secured on behalf of their members during the pandemic through negotiations with employers, regulators and government. These range from the TUC securing agreement with the Treasury for the furlough scheme to health unions negotiated new guidance for overtime pay for NHS staff working during the pandemic, and to more specific agreements such as that struck by the PDAU with the Department for Health and Social Care to confirm that compensation cases for the families of community pharmacists who lost their life from COVID-19 would be treated in the same way as in other parts of the NHS and social care sectors.

Alongside 'new' negotiation issues, unions secured agreements with employers that took the new reality of the pandemic into account. Equity and the Musicians' Union negotiated temporary variations to collective bargaining agreements with major performing arts venues and theatres to protect jobs and terms and conditions. The Nationwide Group Staff Union negotiated an agreement to ensure that no-one made redundant at Nationwide had to leave before December 31st.

Some staff report that economic uncertainty brought about by COVID-19 immediately made negotiations with employers very tough, that formal processes over pay were paused, and that at the height of the lockdown some employers did not consult over furlough arrangements, pay cuts, time off for homeschooling and annual leave arrangements. As the lockdown began, formal negotiations moved online and whilst most participants report that constructive dialogue with employers has been maintained, some report that remote working and online interactions can make engaging with employers more difficult, with one noting that it is *"easier for employers to avoid meetings and not respond to electronic communication, dodge phone calls etc., previously could turn up on doorstep/office"*. One regional organiser described how *"We do see employers turning up with a shopping list of stuff they want.... a lot of which we've been actively resisting for a long time"* and another organiser described how *"we are seeing the employers try to make changes via the back door, constantly using the pandemic as the reason"*. As with any set of negotiations, union negotiators describe the need for close scrutiny of employer proposals but also that new processes have had to be developed for the new context of online negotiations where documents can be electronically 'tabled' during meetings.

COVID-19 AND THE WORK OF TRADE UNIONS

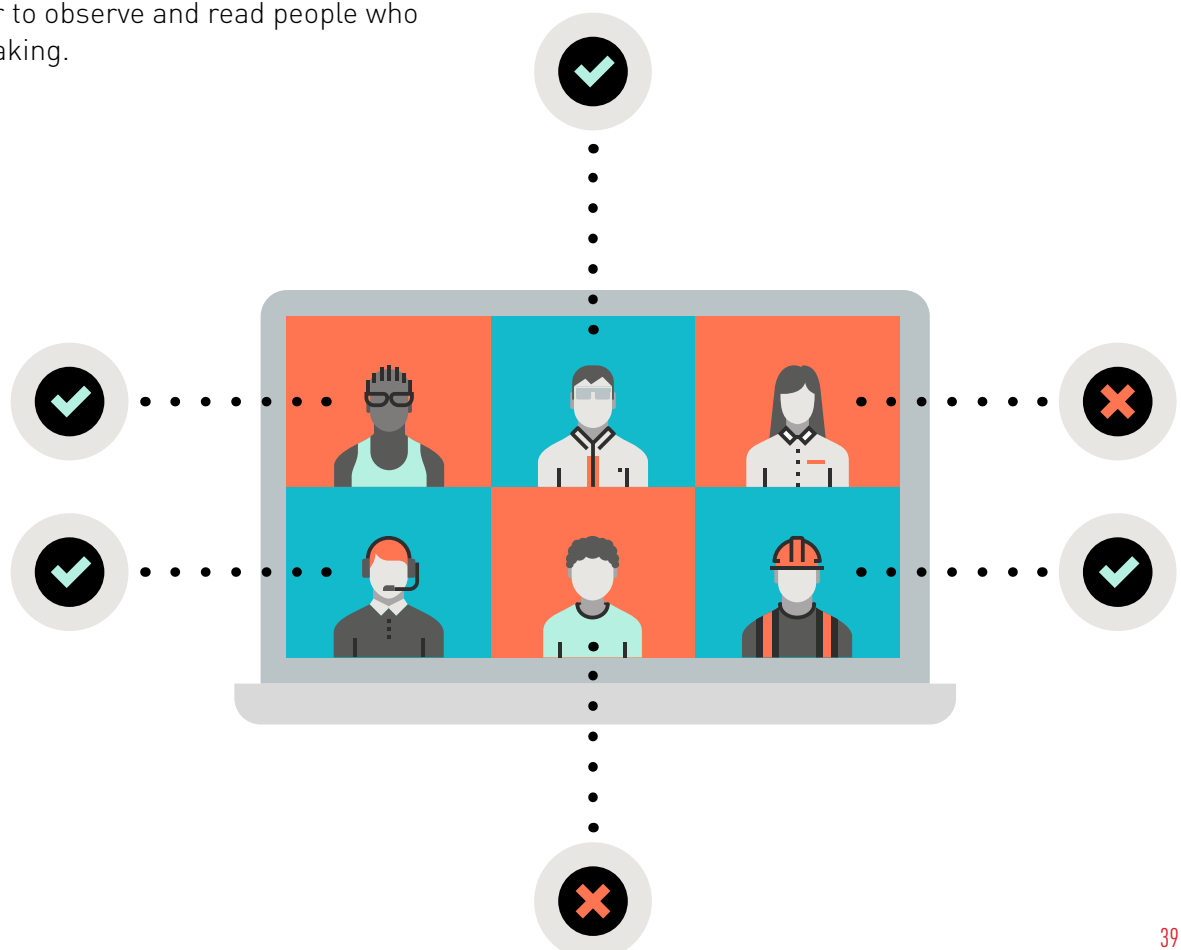# The pros and cons of online negotiations

DIFFICULTIES

Online negotiations quickly became standard practice when remote working and social distancing measures were introduced. Many union officials report difficulties and new challenges arising from online negotiations that they have had to navigate. For example:

• The platform set up. Negotiations held over Zoom with one main room, potentially several breakout rooms and phone calls taking place outside of the main conversation were described by one regional organiser as *"10 times as difficult"* compared to in-person negotiations.

• Negotiations being longer and slower. This is in part because of the loss of informal conversations and cues. As one organiser said, *"you can't have a quick conversation on the way to the room with somebody"* or an informal chat over coffee to find points of compromise. It is much harder to read the room when the room is virtual, harder to read body language to assess people's positions and gauge how to respond, and harder to observe and read people who aren't speaking.

ADVANTAGES

However, online negotiations and remote working are seen to have some advantages for unions:

• Consulting members mid-negotiations is far easier when this involves setting up an online video call rather than convening an in-person meeting or consulting by email. Video conferencing also makes it easier to convene members before meetings, and at short notice if needed, to agree their core demands and red lines.

• Some negotiators report that online negotiations can be less hierarchical with the online format meaning that power dynamics arising from status and location can be reduced when, as one survey respondent said *"all are sitting on Teams not at a directors table"*.

Individual member representation

Hearings to represent individual members in proceedings relating to disciplinary matters, grievances and absences have nearly all been conducted online since March using video conference platforms. A small minority are reported as having taken place using telephone conference calls and only in very rare situations have in-person hearings been held, once full COVID-secure risk assessments have been carried out. Initially in the first period of the lockdown most proceedings that were already scheduled to take place in-person were postponed but they were quickly rearranged in new online formats.

Overall, survey respondents and interviewees report broad satisfaction with how online processes of representation have taken place and do not consider the level of support they can provide to members to have diminished. However they highlight new challenges they have faced including how to provide remote support for members and responding to new forms of challenge from employers.

PROVIDING PASTORAL SUPPORT TO MEMBERS

Providing remote pastoral care to members is widely identified as being difficult when hearings are online, both during, and before and after hearings. Members have found themselves alone during hearings which has tended to cause anxiety. This is heightened when the rep and member had not previously met in-person. Union officers now get to know members online in advance to prepare them and mitigate any difficulties. One official reported that, if necessary, they now communicate by WhatsApp *"during online meetings to get them to stop talking themselves into trouble."*

AGREEING PROCEEDINGS WITH EMPLOYERS

As more online proceedings have taken place, reps report learning how to manage the process better and learning how to liaise with employers to agree joint processes and rules for how proceedings will be organised. This has included securing agreement for the scheduling of regular breaks and ensuring that secure break-out rooms are provided for the member and rep to join during breaks.

However, reps raised concerns about the level of control employers can have over online proceedings. Where proceedings are held on platforms that are part of secure company networks, reps noted that they are aware meetings could be recorded and that by accessing the network as a 'guest' they sometimes do not have access to all of the online facilities that the host has. To counter this, reps have, in some instances, sought to use web-based third-party platforms like Zoom, although some employers resist this citing security concerns. Tactics used by some hostile employers in online proceedings include: limiting or denying adjournments so that reps and members can't speak privately; not switching on their cameras; suggesting that the signal is too bad or the software is non-compatible to enable a virtual meeting, and using speakerphone or hands-free on a mobile phone to reduce the call quality. Seeking to agree joint processes and rules is important in an attempt to mitigate such hostility but clearly cannot remove it entirely.

KEY FINDINGS

- COVID-19 immediately changed the economic backdrop to negotiations with employers. Unions have secured new COVID-related agreements and amendments to existing agreements.

- Negotiations have moved online and are widely seen to be more difficult as well as often being longer. The absence of interpersonal communication has led to a formalisation of negotiations.

- Staff and reps have had to learn new ways to negotiate online.

- Unions have represented members in online disciplinary and grievance hearings. It is more difficult for reps to provide emotional support to members whilst operating remotely.

- Future negotiations are widely expected to be more challenging for unions as a deep recession is forecast.

Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

The pandemic has led unions to adapt to make significant changes to the issues they are negotiating with employers about and to how processes of collective and individual representation take place. As the immediate health crisis hopefully lessens in 2021 the worsening economic outlook looks set to shape and dominate future negotiations. The coming months will therefore require further adaptation and learning, especially so for UK unions as they represent their members against the backdrop of the deepest decline in economic output for over 300 years. Challenges and questions on the imminent horizon include:

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO NEGOTIATIONS WHEN IT IS POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO FACE-TO-FACE DIALOGUE?

Interviews expressed concern that some employers may seek to keep negotiations online even when it is no longer required. How will unions respond to this, and recognising the potential advantages, might there be times when unions prefer to conduct negotiations online?

HOW WILL UNIONS SUPPORT STAFF AND REPS WHO ENGAGE IN CHALLENGING NEGOTIATIONS?

The goodwill that existed between some employers and unions in the early period of the pandemic, particularly in the public sector where there was a sense of everyone pulling together to get through a crisis, has eroded as the pandemic has gone on. As the economic outlook worsens and as government support packages for businesses and workers wind down, many interviewees and survey respondents expect to find themselves having to negotiate to prevent redundancies and to protect terms and conditions. Concerns were widely shared that employer hostility towards unions may increase in the months ahead and that negotiations may be tougher in 2021 than in 2020. The workload and emotional burden that this will place on staff and reps will require close monitoring by union leaders and the provision of pastoral support and professional training.
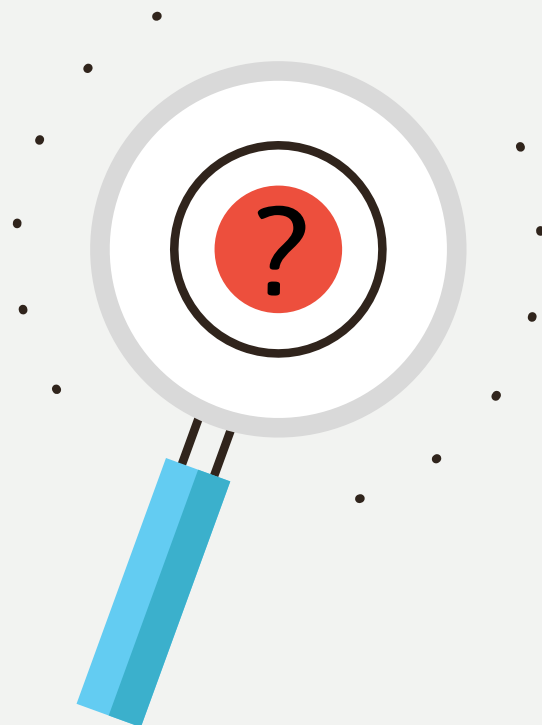
ARE UNIONS READY TO ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYERS ON BOTH EXISTING AND NEW ISSUES, AND HOW WILL EMPLOYERS RESPOND?

The pandemic has led to members' raising concerns with unions about new issues that either did not exist 12 months ago or were considerably lower on their list of priorities. These include:

- members wanting support from employers to cover the additional costs they are now incurring from working at home;

- the 'right to disconnect' from work and to challenge the use of surveillance monitoring software;

- the '4-day week' and reductions in working hours

- the right to have a more flexible working arrangement to ensure the benefits of homeworking are not lost when workplaces return to more 'normal' conditions;

- better support to deal with issues relating to their mental health and wellbeing;

- and, how to begin to navigate challenges that hybrid working for teams split across multiple locations will bring.

Some unions have already begun to engage employees in dialogue around new workplace issues such as these and are seeking to have them included into collective bargaining agreements. How willing employers will be to listen and agree to new demands is an open question, especially when negotiations will take place in an economic context that many employers may seek to use as justification for not agreeing to any new terms and conditions.
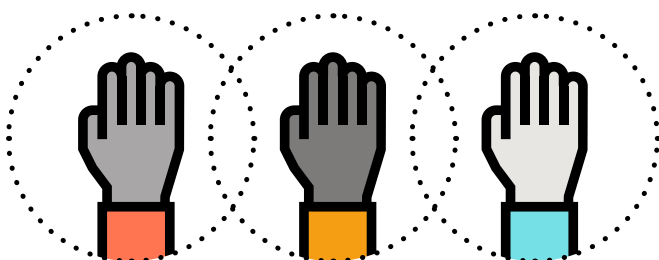
9: Union democracy and governance

This chapter considers the changes that have taken place to branch meetings, to national governance arrangements with a specific focus on NEC meetings, and to union conferences and it highlights how new democratic structures within unions were also established during 2020.

Branch meetings have moved online

Even where members are still working in their normal workplaces, social distancing prevents in-person meetings from being held. Moving to online branch meetings has involved learning how to use new platforms, how to structure debates and vote on motions, and head offices have needed to develop guidance for how to run online AGMs. Whilst some survey respondents describe the shift to online meetings as being messy at times, there are a number of positive trends that can be observed once initial teething problems have been overcome:

SHORTER MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD MORE FREQUENTLY

Branch meetings are reported as being held more frequently and being shorter in length with more focused agendas on a smaller number of issues than would previously have been typical at in-person meetings. This is consistent with the widely reported trend reported by survey respondents that as union staff and members have become more familiar with remote working a preference for shorter video calls, where possible, has developed.

MORE INCLUSIVE

Online meetings are seen as more inclusive with members who would normally struggle to attend meetings due to caring responsibilities or who are unable to travel now more able to participate. Survey respondents report that online meetings has led to higher participation and greater levels of engagement with union business, as the comment below illustrates:

> "I have seen a much greater participation in branch meetings using virtual meeting rooms. Instead of a handful, we are consistently getting 70+ members to a meeting. This has led to greater interaction using chat facilities, members are more forthcoming and quicker to respond to the branch"

The shift to online meetings and sharing learning about how to move online has led to new branches being formed and to the revival of moribund regional structures. In a recent Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) webinar, the union's North East branch described how they had moved to an online format. Following the webinar, AEP members in Scotland, where lower density has made it hard to sustain a physical branch structure, have been inspired to establish a virtual branch. This is now encouraging wider discussion in the union about establishing virtual branches in regions without physical branch structures.

National governance arrangements

Union governance processes have also moved online. Some implications of this shift drawing on interviewee testimony about the national executive committees (NEC) of two unions and the council of a third union are shared below. Interviewees highlighted how the shift online can have implications for how decisions are made, on who participates in decision making processes, and crucially on how shifting to online meetings can alter the nature of decisions made by executive bodies.

WORKING ON AND OFFLINE TO IMPROVE DECISION MAKING

Before lockdown, the NEC of one union met in session for a week a month spending nearly all of their time together both in the boardroom as well as socialising together in breaks and evenings and lodging together. Since March the NEC has met online through Zoom. Participants noted a change in nature of decisions from when the executive met in-person. Specifically, as a senior official from the union described, *"we were becoming increasingly risk averse"* with implications for the *"direction of travel of the trade union"*. This shift was attributed to members wanting to avoid confrontation when online, not being able to pick up on unconscious cues and from the absence of being able to informally discuss business outside of the 'formal' meetings. Recognising this meant that a lot more offline one-to-one conversations between NEC members and union officials now take place to *"bring back the informal chit chat"* and to provide more of the explanation and information that is picked up informally and unconsciously in and around in-person meetings.
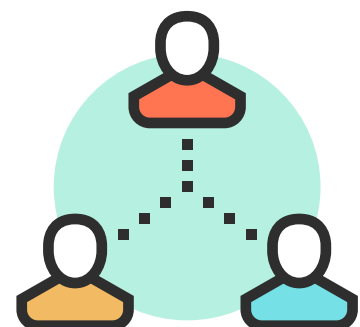
ADOPTING NEW STRUCTURES

Another union would meet in-person six times a year for a two-day residential meeting. Since the first lockdown NEC meetings have changed to become two online half-day sessions on consecutive mornings. To make the most efficient use of NEC members' time and to avoid members being online all day, meetings are now planned differently with more of an expectation that papers

are read in advance and with reports that are tabled to be noted. Business is positively described by an attendee as now being done *"much quicker"*. Moving online has also prompted NEC subcommittee meetings to be scheduled differently so that they take place in between NEC meetings which is seen as allowing for better consideration and scrutiny of their minutes and decisions. In the future, the NEC may move to a mixed system of some in-person meetings for team building purposes and a majority of meetings remaining online.

> The PDAU launched three new equalities networks in 2020 as part of the union's work to advance its equalities work and better meet the demands of members. The union's new Ability (which focuses on issues of particular relevance to disabled pharmacists), BAME and LGBT+ networks were all launched in April and are beginning to hold their own events and elections.

GETTING THE PLATFORM RIGHT

Another union has held online Council meetings and their experience highlights the benefits of using online platforms that people feel comfortable with and that fit the needs of the meeting. For its first two online Council meetings the union worked with an online learning organisation and *"went straight in with a big, all-singing all-dancing classroom"* style platform which drew resistance from some members: *"older people hated it, young people really liked it"*. Evaluation after the first two meetings led to the conclusion that they didn't need a platform that could *"do everything"* and so a decision was made to use MS Teams on the basis that Council members were more familiar with it, as were union staff who were then better able to provide support to members. Online Council

meetings are reported as being better attended and are seen to run more efficiently than in-person meetings. However, it is noted that younger and newer Council members often find it harder to raise questions if they don't understand something, and that these members lose out on the informal learning that comes from interacting with and observing more experienced members in and outside of meetings, for example in coffee breaks. For these reasons it is expected that the union will revert to in-person Council meetings when this becomes possible again.

Conferences

As the first wave of the pandemic hit, the union response to planned conferences was to either postpone until later in 2020 or to 2021, go ahead, or refer scheduled motions to NECs. When conferences have gone ahead in 2020, they have been online and have tended to be shorter in length (typically over one or two days) and more limited in scope than traditional in-person conferences. Unions have experimented with new online conference formats and platforms which offer points for learning. Whilst online conferences offer the potential for more members to participate, interviewees highlight that they should not be seen as a like-for-like replacement for physical conferences.

IT'S NOT LIKE FOR LIKE

Unions that have held online conferences have taken the view that they cannot simply be a direct replication of a physical conference but require considerable planning and resources – not only cost but also staff time – to make them a success.

The CSP held their annual professional development conference online (their 2020 reps conference was cancelled). When it became clear that an in-person conference wouldn't be possible, the CSP leadership took the view that *"if we were going to go virtually it couldn't just be a series of the zoom seminars linked together"*. To provide a different offer they used a platform called Virbela that saw the 1400 (paying) delegates design their own avatars which participated in a 'virtual conference world'. The conference, described by an

interviewee as being *"as near as you can get to being at a physical conference"*, was considered a success. The platform, which comes with a significant cost of a fee and per-person charge, is likely to be used again by the union for training purposes.

Another union held their annual conference online in September. A senior leader from the union described that one half of the conference was broadcast live to all members which worked well but that the other part, a closed online session where delegates debated and voted on motions, was less successful. Many delegates were not familiar with the online platform that was being used which made the processes of voting and speaking in debates *"messy"*. They expressed a hope that this part of the conference could return to being an in-person event in 2021.

Unions' experiences of online conferences prompted reflection from some interviewees about what the purpose of union conferences is. It was noted that online conferences cannot provide the same networking opportunities that in-person meetings provide nor the chance to engage in informal processes of discussion, negotiation, lobbying and 'fixing' that would often take place at conferences away from the formal conference hall. Interviewees also reflected that online conferences should lead to a debate in unions about whether traditional in-person conferences are the best use of members' and staff time. One interviewee suggested that in future their union could hold an online conference for the more procedural business of motions, reports and discussion about rule changes and then *"have the in-person conference where we could actually have debates about the real things"* and to capitalise on the benefits of in-person interactions. Another union leader suggested their union may now consider rotating between an in-person and an online conference every other year, and that future in-person conferences are likely to be 'blended' to include virtual elements such as having international keynote speakers join remotely by video. Several interviewees also described the difficulty of planning their conferences in 2021 due to the uncertainty about when social distancing will be sufficiently relaxed in order to put the option of in-person conferences back on the table.

KEY FINDINGS

- Branch meetings have moved online. Higher levels of member participation are reported.

- Using online platforms for union democratic structures creates the potential to establish new branches and for stronger online communities of members and reps.

- Union conferences in the spring and summer 2020 were cancelled or postponed but online conferences have taken place in autumn 2020.

- Online conferences require careful planning and investment of time and resources to make them run smoothly. They are not a like-for-like replacement for in-person events.

- Online NEC meetings can work efficiently but the virtual format and loss of informal interaction can risk changing the nature of decision making.
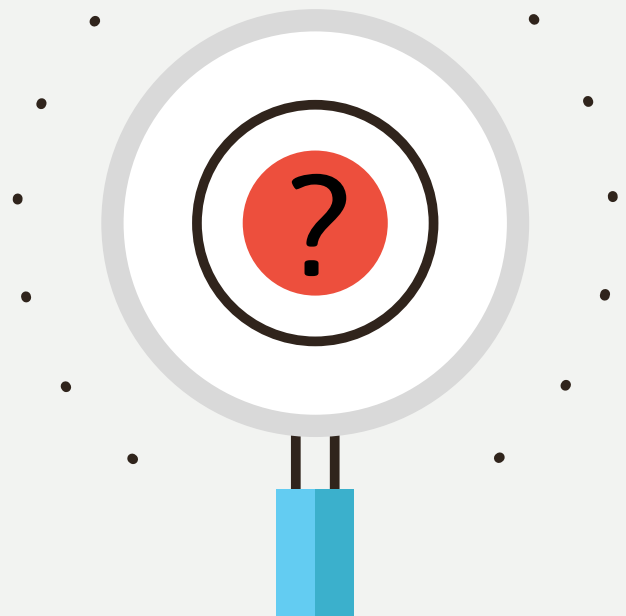
Looking ahead: new challenges and questions

This chapter has shown the positives of union democratic and governance processes moving online but also highlighted some of the potential downsides. As social distancing measures are relaxed and it becomes possible to hold in-person events again there will be the temptation to revert to business as usual and move away from online formats. Unions have clear evidence from the last year that online meetings and conferences can work and can bring together greater numbers of members than would tend to participate in in-person events. Whilst the quantity of member input into union democracy can increase when democratic structures migrate online, this should be considered alongside concerns that have been expressed about the quality of decision making made online.

WHEN UNIONS BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN THEIR DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WHAT OUTCOMES DO THEY AIM TO ACHIEVE?

As unions now deliberate on how branch meetings, conferences and governance arrangements should be organised in the future, a focus on the 'why' and not the 'how' will allow for effective consideration about what the appropriate structures and mechanisms for each union are. There will not be a one-size-fits-all approach for all unions nor even within unions. Branch meetings, national governance meetings and conferences will all require different formats and not necessarily the same format all of the time. The experiences outlined in this chapter show that online democratic and governance processes are more effective when the medium is chosen to fit the purpose, not because of what they can do, and when participants are familiar with the platform.

Looking ahead, it is also worth noting that many interviewees were sceptical about the potential for hybrid events (both meetings and conferences) that combine in-person and virtual audiences to be successful. Although it is likely that many people within unions would have expressed similar scepticism a year ago about the idea that online meetings could be so widely adopted and be so broadly successful. Further experimentation will be required alongside continual evaluation to assess what is and isn't working. If this takes place alongside the great member engagement (see Chapter 4) that has taken place within unions since the start of the pandemic then it indicates that union democracy and governance can be made stronger not weaker.
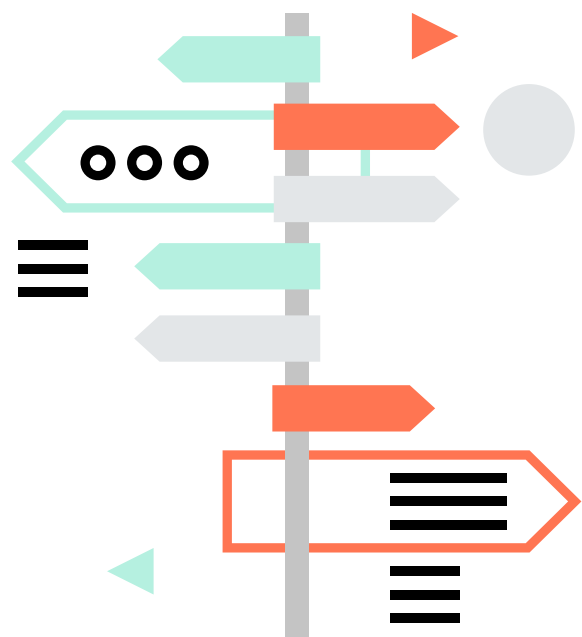
PART THREE

10: Forward planning

As this report shows there is much for unions that feel proud of when they reflect on their work since the pandemic began, both for the way they have engaged with, supported and defended their members, and for how they are transforming the ways in which they do that work. But at the same time a strong theme running through this research project has been concerns expressed by participants that the need for their union, rightly, to focus on the immediate issues at hand has limited its ability to be able to a) focus proactively on longer term strategic issues facing their members and reflect on whether the pandemic is changing those issues and b) reflect on the rapid changes they have made during the pandemic and consider if those changes alter the union's long-term trajectory or indicate that alterations may need to be made.

Reflecting, thinking and acting strategically is essential for any organisation, but having come through a tough year and with another tough and uncertain year ahead, one Deputy General Secretary interviewed for the project remarked that it feels particularly important in this moment for unions to take stock and set out a positive vision for the future to show *"where we're going after this"*.

This final chapter looks at the importance for unions of taking stock of the changes they have made and experienced during the pandemic, and explores some of the key challenges and questions for unions to consider as they plan ahead.

Reflecting on 2020. Looking ahead to 2021 and beyond

Long-term planning in the midst of any crisis is hard but unions are not starting with a blank sheet of paper. Most unions already have strategic plans in place to guide their long term direction of travel and ensure that the union can engage with the long-term challenges their members face at work. The concerns expressed by participants are not about those plans but about ensuring that sufficient time and space is created so they can be reassessed, and updated if necessary, in the context of the new situations and challenges created by COVID-19.

Moving ahead, it will be important for unions to both reflect on 2020 and look forward to 2021 and beyond by asking key questions about their future and the future of work for their members. These could include questions such as:
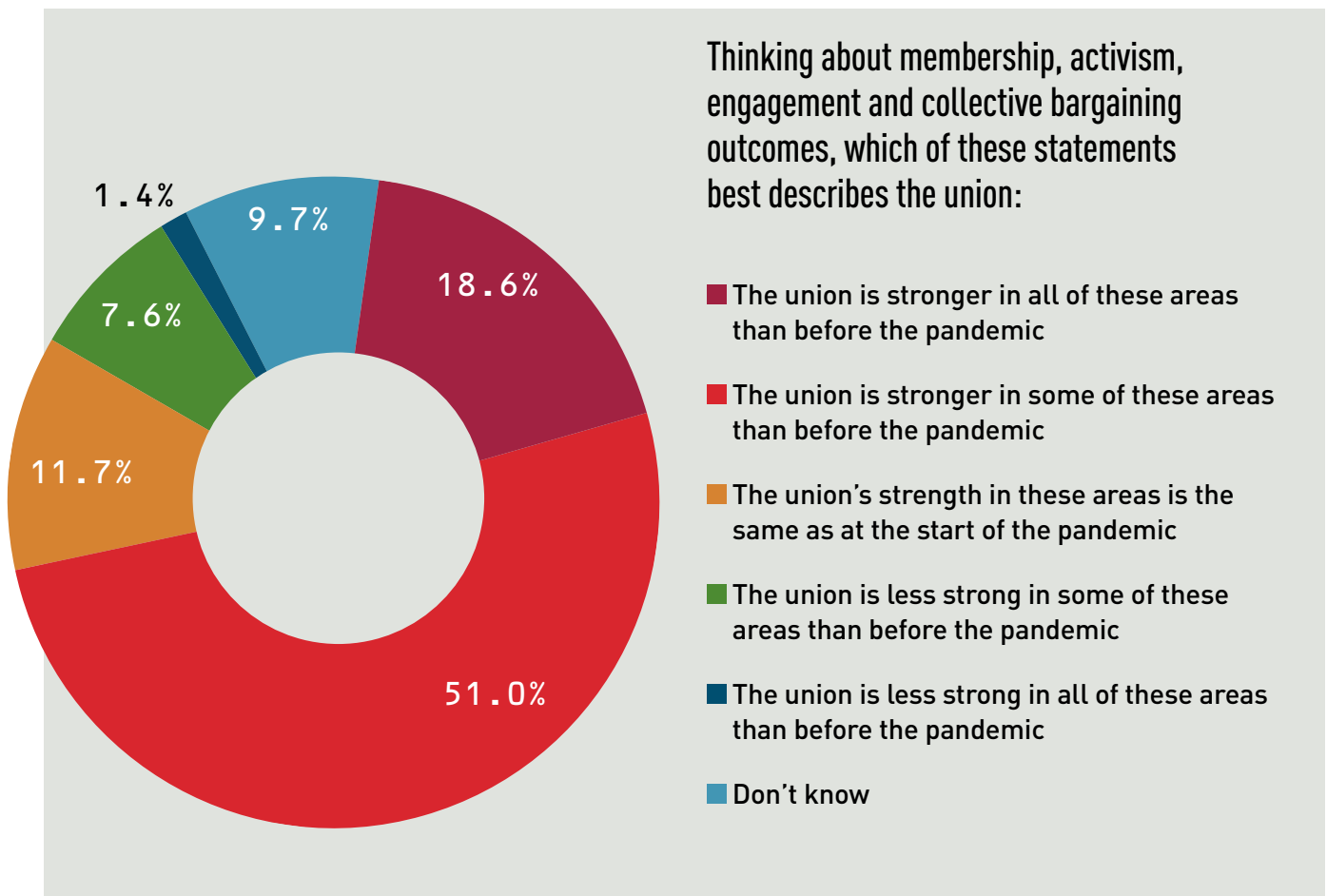
- What do members want work to look like in 5 or 10 years, and are those views changing because of COVID-19?

- What will the jobs of members look like in 5 or 10 years and is this changing, or likely to change, because of COVID-19? And what might those jobs look like without the influence of unions?

- What do members and non-members want from a union, and is this changing as a result of the pandemic?

- How will members engage with unions in 5 or 10 years time (and how will they want to engage) and is this changing as a result of the pandemic?

- How will union organising take place in 5 or 10 years time, and is the answer to this changing because of the pandemic?

- And, what can unions learn from their experiences in 2020 to help them on the path to answering these questions?

The need to look ahead was clearly articulated by a senior union official interviewed during the project:

"It's really difficult emotionally for anyone to forecast going forward because we're still in the middle of the maelstrom. We've already said we're not going back and everyone kind of knows we're not going back to what we were, but nobody quite knows what the future will be. It's really difficult to – and I think it'd be pointless trying to – offer all of the answers, but if you don't ask the questions at this point then you will lose the opportunity because someone else will impose a solution on unions."

As this quote notes, it is difficult and tiring to try and focus on the long-term horizon when the immediate challenges and hardship being caused by COVID are still so acute and are likely to worsen. But it is because of the pandemic and unions' responses to it that new possibilities have opened up that can enable unions to look with renewed confidence to the long-term. Despite the challenges unions and their members are facing, the experiences and learning during the last 12 months has created a strong sense of optimism within unions and provided a renewed sense of confidence.

Thinking about membership, activism, engagement and collective bargaining outcomes, which of these statements best describes the union:

- ■ The union is stronger in all of these areas than before the pandemic
- ■ The union is stronger in some of these areas than before the pandemic
- ■ The union's strength in these areas is the same as at the start of the pandemic
- ■ The union is less strong in some of these areas than before the pandemic
- ■ The union is less strong in all of these areas than before the pandemic
- ■ Don't know

1.4% **9.7%** **18.6%** **7.6%** **11.7%** **51.0%**

70% of survey respondents think that their union is now stronger than it was before the pandemic when it comes to membership, activism, engagement and collective bargaining outcomes. Only 9% think that the union is less strong in these areas than before the pandemic.

When asked to explain their position on their union's strength, respondents attribute the increase in strength to greater levels of member engagement during the pandemic and how this is leading to more members becoming active in the union, and to the speed of changes that the union has implemented: *"We have proved we can move quickly and innovate effectively to carry on despite the pandemic."*

These sentiments were widely echoed by interviewees from across unions and at all levels of seniority who described how the pandemic has led to enhanced ambition for the union, greater awareness of what is possible and given a renewed sense of purpose. One senior leader described the feeling amongst staff that *"you've*

never felt like what you did mattered more for people", and another expressed their hope that COVID *"makes us think bigger"*.

So the challenge now is for unions to both look back and forwards. To reflect and ask, what worked during the last year and why? And how can that learning help unions to address the long-term challenges they face? The biggest immediate challenge is of course the threat to life and livelihoods from COVID-19. Despite vaccines now becoming available, when and how the immediate health crisis will end is unknown. The continued reduction in economic activity will therefore remain meaning that the extreme threat to jobs and incomes in large parts of the economy will continue and is forecast to significantly worsen. Unions will therefore need to continue to be reactive as they have been throughout the pandemic to tackle the immediate challenges facing their members whilst also seeking to look further ahead. The issues identified here are presented to help unions to do that.

New challenges and questions

LONG-TERM TRENDS ABOUT THE WORLD OF WORK

What is the impact of the pandemic on long-term structural changes to how we work, and what will be the impact in the short and long-term of any changes? Interviewees report that the pandemic has seen employers accelerate automation, for example in sectors like financial services as fewer people visit bank branches in-person, meanwhile the potential for long-term changes to retail, office working and public transport use is evident from spending time in any city centre. Engaging with members to understand the changes they are experiencing now as well as investing in research to understand the implications of long-term structural changes will be essential to enable unions to engage effectively with employers, regulators and governments to shape the long-term future of jobs and industries.

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT WITH EMPLOYERS

How is the pandemic impacting the leverage and influence of unions? Interviewees highlight a range of strategic challenges that they face in negotiations which arise from changes caused by the pandemic in parts of the public and private sector. For example, in sectors where there is considerably reduced demand (e.g transportation) or where many people continue to work from home, will new forms of industrial action, if required, need to be developed? And in sectors where the pandemic has led to enforced closures (e.g. creative industries) unions will need to navigate the challenge of supporting sectors and employers to re-open but doing so in a way that protects terms and conditions.

NEW ISSUES TO FOCUS ON

As noted throughout the report, the pandemic and the greater engagement with members that it has led to has made some issues become much more prominent for unions. For example, some unions report how issues relating to working from home or the challenges faced by freelance and self-employed members have moved significantly higher up their list of priority areas. The pandemic has also forced some unions to look hard at questions and challenges they had previously overlooked or tolerated. For example, a health union leader cited how their union has previously tolerated some members working extremely long hours, in part because of the overtime benefits this provides. They explained how COVID was leading to a quiet majority of members now raising their concerns about workload, pay and professional standards so that this tension was being brought out into the open and cannot be ignored. Unions will need to think about how they integrate new issues and related new demands from members into their strategic planning and negotiations with employers.

BREXIT

Despite a trade agreement with the EU finally being agreed, jobs and working rights remain at risk. Many sectors, especially manufacturing, now face new non-tariff barriers and higher production costs as a result; the threat that workers' rights could be stripped back remains, and the deal puts in place only limited arrangements for services. Moreover, there is significant uncertainty about the rights of specific groups of workers such as touring musicians and performers to work in Europe, and no mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Alongside their immediate focus on dealing with the threat to life and livelihoods from COVID-19, unions will need to step up their advocacy work to lobby government and work with industry partners and employers to make sure the voices of union members shape future trade negotiations.

UK

There are also new challenges and questions relating to the internal organisation of unions to consider:

FATIGUE

The coming year will ask a lot of staff and reps again as the pandemic continues and the economic situation is likely to deteriorate. Many staff and reps report being exhausted after a year of higher workloads, longer hours and having gone through the tiring process of changing the ways in which they do their work, all whilst navigating the everyday stresses and strains of living through a pandemic. Unions will need to ensure staff and reps continue to receive the pastoral and professional support they need so that the risks of burnout, despondency and the negative consequences for physical and mental health and wellbeing are avoided.
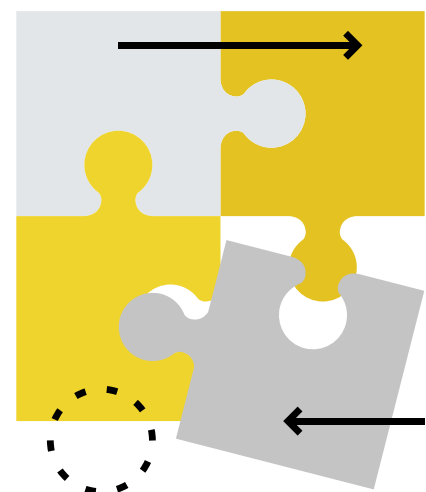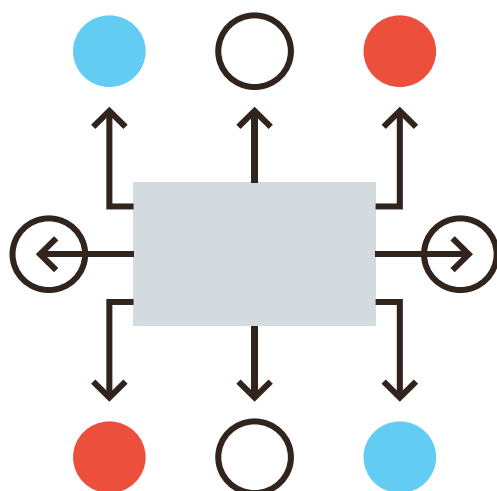
THE STRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS OF UNIONS

Does the period of remote working brought about by COVID-19 mean long term changes to the structure and physical footprint of the unions are needed? Some unions are already considering changes and others may wish to. If they do then considering questions such as, what are the positives and negatives for staff of remote working, and what has been the impact, if any, of remote working on the union's effectiveness, will be required. And, perhaps more fundamentally, have new ways of working in the last year changed the relationships between different parts of unions? Some participants in the research

reported positively that more direct engagement with members has given the union a flatter, less hierarchical structure but others cautiously questioned whether the balance of power in their union may have tilted more towards the centre and away from reps and branches. Reflecting on recent changes to the structures and systems of unions to examine whether the relationships between the central union, regional structures, branches, reps and members have changed – and whether they should change – is something unions may wish to now consider.

CAPABILITIES AND CAPACITY

What lessons can be learnt from 2020 that highlight where investment may be required to strengthen the capabilities and capacity of the union and support its long-term resource base? Evidence in this report has highlighted areas in which unions may need to invest including: training and support infrastructure for members and reps, training to equip staff with new skills, analytical capabilities, digital infrastructure (including membership systems, websites and web presence, and communication tools), and crucially, new staff.

CONCLUSION

This report concludes fully aware that a menu of recommendations has not been presented and that it arguably raises more questions than answers. It has done so because there is no one blueprint for unions to follow, but what it has sought to do is present examples of best practice, adaptation and learning that reflect the ways in which unions have worked to represent their members during the COVID-19 pandemic and how that work is continuing to change as the pandemic continues. The report is intended to be a useful contribution to the ongoing conversation within the union movement about how best to support workers and improve work and to spark new conversation and collaborations within and between unions.

The conversation about how unions can most effectively support workers and improve work is ever-present and essential – and it feels more vital at this particular moment. The long-term challenges that existed before the pandemic such as how digitalisation is changing work for many, to under-investment in public services and the climate emergency are all still there and in some cases have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Similarly, the major challenges facing unions including declining collective bargaining coverage, low private sector membership and the aging demographics of union members remain. As the earlier quote noted, solutions will be imposed on unions if these challenges aren't addressed head-on.

The mantra 'build back better' is now so widely used that it is not hard to see that some who use it simply want to 'build back just like before COVID'. Whilst some employers have clear interests to do this, many workers will not want to. This report demonstrates ways in which unions have changed during the period of the pandemic, and can continue to change, to ensure they effectively defend their members' interests and improve work. By doing so unions can play a role in ensuring that the world beyond COVID-19 is genuinely remade to be one in which all working people are treated with the fairness, respect and dignity they deserve.

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Appendix: contributions from unions

Staff and reps from the following unions and union federations contributed to the research:

Accord

ACV Transcom (Belgium)

ASLEF

Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)

College of Podiatry

Community

E tū (New Zealand)

Equity

European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

FDA

Finansförbundet (Sweden)

FNV (Netherlands)

Fórsa (Ireland)

International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (USA)

Musicians' Union

NAHT

National Education Union

National Union of Journalists (NUJ)

Nationwide Group Staff Union (NGSU)

Nautilus International

PCS

Pharmacists' Defence Association Union (PDAU)

Prospect

Prospect (Bectu Sector)

Royal College of Midwives (RCM)

Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania (USA)

Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) (Ireland)

Society of Radiographers

Swedish Maritime Officers' Association

TCO (Sweden)

Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA)

TUC

Unión de Ingenieros Marinos (Panama)

Union of General & Volunteer Workers

UNISON

UNITE HERE (USA)

University and College Union (UCU)

Vision (Sweden)

Unions 21
77 St John Street
London EC1M 4NN

www.unions21.org.uk