

WORKING WITH YOUR LOCAL UNISON BRANCH

Your local trade union branch should be at the heart of your living wage campaign. This short briefing, written in conjunction with our partner in the Living Wage campaign UNISON, will give you some useful advice to do that.

ABOUT UNISON - DID YOU KNOW?

UNISON is the largest union in education in the UK, representing 350,000 education staff.

Its members include librarians, registrars, people working in personnel, IT and finance departments, teaching assistants, technicians, early years (nursery) staff, policy advisors, administrators, secretaries, cleaners, caretakers, school meals workers, craft workers, porters working in schools, children's services, colleges and universities.

UNISON was one of the prime movers in the campaign to introduce a National Minimum Wage which was introduced by the Labour government in 1998 amidst warnings from the Tories that it would lead to large job losses.

UNISON has welcomed Labour Students support for a living wage to be implemented across universities and colleges, and will be working with Labour Students on the Living Wage campaign.

When looking to work with your trade union branch, it is most likely that you will discover that they are a UNISON branch.

WHY WORK WITH THE LOCAL UNISON/TRADE UNION BRANCH?

- **May already be existing campaigns/disputes which you could affect with your campaigning work**

If you start your campaign without speaking to the trade union on campus first, you run the risk of affecting existing campaigns or disputes that the union are involved in. If you don't speak to the union first, you run the risk of making things worse for staff not better.

- **Access to low paid staff**

Your campaign cannot get off the ground until you have built relationships with low paid staff on your campus. Often, it can be difficult to find those staff and build up their trust. By working with the trade union you can forge those relationships more easily by going through the system and the people that staff have already built up trust in. If you find yourself speaking to workers who are not members of a union, see if they'd like to join UNISON by calling 0845 355 0845 or going to www.unison.org.uk/join.

- **Campaigning expertise**

Your trade union branch will have invaluable campaigning expertise and also insight in to the decision-making processes in your university or college. They may remember about previous campaigns that have similarities with the living wage campaign, and they may offer to join in with your campaign themselves.

- **Historic importance of trade unions and the Labour Party**

We are encouraging you to use models of community organising for your campaign but we want to make it clear that we think that this must be alongside trade union organisation. Trade Unions are at the heart of the Labour Movement and are leading the way running Living Wage campaigns in workplaces across the UK. Working with your local trade union branch shouldn't just be a courtesy; they should always be your natural first point of call.



LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

@labour_students | @m4conline
www.labourstudents.org.uk/livingwage

HOW SHOULD YOU APPROACH WORKING WITH THE LOCAL UNISON BRANCH?

- **Contact us before you make contact**

If you don't already have a strong relationship with your trade union branch, email Olivia_bailey@new.labour.org.uk before you approach them. Working with UNISON, the Labour Students office will be able to put you in touch with the relevant person and help facilitate your working together.

- **Be helpful and flexible...**

It is important that you approach your relationship with your local trade union with a spirit of friendship and collaboration. Where it is possible, adapt your campaign to help them, and you should be able to expect them to take action to help you.

- **...but don't let them put you off running the campaign**

On rare occasions, you may not get a response from your local trade union branch. On those occasions, do not be put off from running your Living Wage campaign. Contact the national office if you would like advice on how to deal with these situations.

- **Keep us informed**

So that we can, in partnership with UNISON, keep up to date with collaboration between trade union branches and Labour Students clubs, please keep us informed about how your relationship develops by emailing Olivia_bailey@new.labour.org.uk. Please also ask for help if you have any questions at all about working with your trade union.

KEEP UP TO DATE

As well as the resources on the Labour Students Living Wage website (www.labourstudents.org.uk/livingwage), UNISON's website can provide a wealth of information on the Living Wage and Trade Unions.

Check out:

- unison.org.uk/education/higher
- unison.org.uk/education/further
- unison.org.uk/hiddenworkforce

or just search for living wage' to find plenty of research papers, evidence and news that might prove useful.

RECRUIT STUDENTS TO UNISON & UNISON MEMBERS TO LABOUR STUDENTS

As part of your campaign, consider encouraging fellow students to join UNISON, and encouraging UNISON members to join Labour Students. Thousands of students studying vocational courses for jobs in the public sector such as nurses and social workers are already student members of UNISON. Why not recruit them to Labour Students and grow your membership?



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