# Information About Branch Officer Positions

**Secretary**

The branch secretary ([rule G4.2](http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/15817.pdf)), is responsible for ensuring the proper completion of the following tasks. It is not expected that, especially in larger branches, the branch secretary will personally undertake all these functions but will act as the strategic lead officer and co-ordinator within the branch. The secretary will encourage partnership working within the branch committee and the development of new representatives, will be the manager of branch staff and will manage the delegation of work to other branch officers and branch staff as appropriate, whilst providing support and guidance**. NB: A member may only hold one of the branch chair, branch secretary or branch treasurer posts at any one time (unless otherwise determined by the NEC).**

**Tasks relating to the office of Branch Secretary:**

* to guide the branch’s development through the preparation and implementation of a branch organisation and development plan

* to ensure the representation of members within the branch in accordance with national guidance, and that case forms and applications for services forwarded to UNISON offices are properly completed and authorised

* to convene and attend all meetings of the branch and branch committee.
* to arrange for the minutes of meetings to be kept in a proper manner and circulated to all branch officers and stewards
* to arrange for branch records to be kept in a proper manner  
  to ensure the branch, speedily and accurately, processes applications for membership and maintains records in accordance with UNISON’s systems

* to ensure regular communication with the members of the branch with news of campaigns, negotiations, issues, branch developments and activities
* to communicate with the union’s regional and head offices on behalf of the branch

* to ensure that branch members are aware of opportunities to participate in the activities of the wider union, or within self-organisation if appropriate
* to support, mentor and encourage the stewards in the branch on an individual and collective basis. The Branch Secretary should seek to meet with each steward on a one-to-one basis
* to discuss issues and workplace organisation regularly, to ensure that members and stewards are aware, and take advantage, of educational and training opportunities within UNISON

* to ensure that appropriate publicity activities are developed and co-ordinated by the branch

* to act as spokesperson for the branch when in contact with other levels of the union and external organisations
* to ensure that members receive the benefits, rights and services to which they are entitled

* to co-ordinate all branch negotiations and industrial relations matters.
* to ensure, in conjunction with the branch committee, that the branch observes the union’s rules, supports UNISON campaigns and works towards achieving UNISON’s objectives

* to ensure the proper management and direction of any branch employed staff.

**Chairperson**

**Tasks relating to the office of Branch Chairperson:-**

* to preside at all meetings of the branch and branch committee
* to agree the agenda for meetings with the secretary
* to ensure that business is properly conducted
* to advise the branch officers and branch committee in respect of matters relating to procedure and interpretation of rules
* to ensure that all functions of the branch are carried out
* to work closely with the secretary to provide leadership to the branch.

**Vice Chair**

To preside at meetings of the Branch Committee in the absence of the Chair

**Treasurer**

**Tasks relating to the office of Branch Treasurer:-**

* to conduct the branch’s financial business
* to keep accounts in accordance with the rules
* to provide reports on the financial position of the branch committee
* to provide a detailed financial report for the annual branch meeting(s)
* to advise the branch officers and branch committee in respect of matters relating to financial management and appropriate expenditure
* to provide an audited annual return of branch income.

**Education Co-ordinator**

**Tasks relating to the post of Branch Education Co-ordinator:-**

* To make sure all new stewards and safety representatives receive initial information and guidance about their duties, e.g. stewards handbook, rulebook, service conditions agreements, etc
* To publicise the range of educational and training opportunities available to members and activists
* To get untrained stewards, safety representatives and other branch officers onto appropriate training courses
* To co-ordinate and support the work of learning representatives to encourage branch members and activists to make use of the UNISON courses
* To maintain contact with the regional education officer/regional learning and organising committee
* To establish a plan of training for activists and to produce an annual budget to meet its costs
* To keep records of what training has been undertaken and by whom within the branch
* To make sure that activists get paid time off for training where appropriate.

**Lifelong Learning Co-Ordinator**

A branch with a number of learning representatives working as a team, led by a co-ordinator, can ensure that learning representatives are accountable and involved in the branch; that learning is high on the branch’s agenda and linked into its organising, bargaining and equalities work; and can provide a clear progression route for learning representatives who want to become more involved in other aspects of branch activity.

**Tasks relating to the post of Branch Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator**:

* to work closely with the branch education Co-ordinator (the same person may take on both roles)

* to co-ordinate the activity of learning representatives in the branch education team

* to work with colleagues to recruit new learning representatives to be closely involved in negotiating around learning with the employer
* to co-ordinate and disseminate information on learning opportunities in the branch
* to ensure that the work of learning representatives is fully integrated into the branch.

**Equality Co-ordinator(s)**

All UNISON representatives should promote equality and challenge discrimination in their union role. Equality Co-ordinators, whilst not expected to be an expert on all equality matters, lead and co-ordinate the branch’s equality work. The Equality Co-ordinator is not a representative of self-organised groups but elected by the members at the AGM. They are however expected to work with representatives of self-organised groups, with equality representatives and all activists. They support the training & development of other union representatives and monitor progress. Branch Equality Co-ordinators should share good practice where there are multiple workplace representatives within branches.

Branches can elect equality representatives for each of their work groups. The role of the equality rep is to promote equality and challenge discrimination in their local area, keeping the Branch Equality Co-ordinator updated on developments.

**Key Tasks relating to the post of Equality Co-ordinator include:**

* to be the central liaison point for equality in the branch; distribute information on equality issues.

* to co-ordinate and support the work of UNISON equality reps at branch level.
* to liaise with and support their branch self-organised groups.
* to promote an equality dimension in all the branch’s work, including bargaining.
* to advise branch officers and the branch committee on proportionality and fair representation, including in branch elections.
* to act as a mentor or buddy to new equality reps and to help them identify their training needs

**Women’s Officer**

Electing a branch Women’s Officer (BWO) offers the opportunity to bring about important changes for women in the workplace. The BWO can network and work collaboratively with other branch women’s officers in their area. They can become involved in the regional women’s committee/ forum or network, attend national women’s conference and help UNISON agree its work plan priorities for the national women’s committee. The branch women’s officer is an important role in UNISON.

**Key Tasks relating to the post of Women’s Officer include**

* Identifying women members of the branch, and liaising with the branch committee on progress towards proportionality
* Being a focal point for women’s issues for members and raising issues affecting women, particularly those with service conditions implications, with the branch committee
* Building links with women’s sector organisations and where appropriate signposting to specialist organisations for women (domestic abuse/Rape Crisis) and assisting in negotiations on employer policies on violence against women
* Supporting women in their issues generally and campaigning on issues important to women
* Organising a women’s group and identifying concerns
* Ensuring that the branch has a wide range of resources for women, such as books, videos and leaflets, and making these resources accessible to all women in the branch.

**Health and Safety Officer**

**Tasks relating to the post of Health and Safety Officer:-**

* to increase the awareness of members, health and safety representatives and branch officers of health and safety issues
* to organise the information held by the branch on health and safety
* to co-ordinate the activity of health and safety representatives and to organise regular meetings of health and safety representatives to exchange information and consider priorities
* to be closely involved in all negotiations with the employer on health and safety matters
* to advise the branch committee on health and safety issues arising in the branch and to recommend policies and priorities
* to act as a link between the health and safety representatives and other branch representatives to ensure that health and safety issues are treated as an integral part of the work of the branch

**Communications Officer**

**Tasks relating to the post of Branch Communications Officer:-**

* to explain UNISON’s policies and to provide the information members need to play an active role in their union
* to assist with efforts to recruit new members
* to help support UNISON’s national and regional campaigns
* to help create a positive image for the branch among members, potential members and the public
* to produce news-sheets or bulletins for distribution to branch members
* to lead on the development of electronic communication with members – email, web, etc
* to ensure branch communications are in the accessible formats members need – audit for any particular requirements such as large print/Braille etc
* to ensure that nationally and regionally produced publicity and campaign materials are distributed, as appropriate, to stewards and onward to members and non-members
* to monitor local media for stories which affect the branch and take appropriate action

To help ensure that the branch makes effective contact with the media whenever necessary by:

* creating and maintaining lists of media and contacts
* writing press releases
* ensuring that appropriate individuals within the branch are available for comments, interviews etc
* writing ‘letters to the editor’.

**Membership Officer**

**Tasks relating to the post of Membership Officer:-**

* to map the branch’s membership in order to identify membership density and steward coverage
* to monitor the branch’s recruitment, and also leavers rate
* liaise with branch committee to develop and implement its organisation and development plan
* to make recommendations to the branch committee on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets, etc.

**International Officer**

**Tasks relating to the post of International Officer:-**

* to co-ordinate the branch’s work on international relations
* to ensure that branch members are informed of national policy on international matters
* to receive and distribute relevant information
* to encourage members to be aware of the importance of international solidarity issues within the context of the overall work by the union
* to liaise where appropriate with regional international structures and to ensure that the views of the branch on international activities are reported appropriately
* to liaise with other branch officers concerning publicity and education on international issues
* to liaise with the solidarity organisations and campaigns that UNISON is affiliated to
* to encourage members of the branch to take action and participate in international solidarity activities organised nationally or regionally
* to ensure that information on branch activity is shared at regional and national level
* to seek to develop an international perspective among members, stewards and branch officers.

**Young Members’ Officer**

The role of the Branch Young Members’ Officer is ideal for someone who is interested in becoming more active in the union. The post may be a stepping stone to becoming a steward or taking on wider roles.  
  
**Tasks relating to the post of Young Members’ Officer:**

* to recruit new members and to encourage existing young members to become active in the branch

* to make sure issues of concern to young workers are raised by the branch
* to act as a focal point for all young workers in the branch and workplaces
* to receive and distribute UNISON young members information
* to encourage involvement in UNISON young members campaigns
* to build branch young members organisation and to ensure there are potential new young members’ officers in the future.

Other branch officers will assist in these tasks.  
*Branch Young Members’ Officer must be under 27 years of age for the whole of their term of office and be nominated by young members.*

**Labour Link Officer**

The Labour Link Officer is elected by and accountable to the Labour Link section within the branch and must be an individual member of the Labour Party – this is because the post holder should work to take UNISON policy forward in the party, often being a delegate to the general committee of the party and encouraging joint work and campaigning with the local constituency Labour Party (CLP).

The branch UNISON Labour Link Officer is the key contact point for information about regional and national UNISON Labour Link matters and is responsible for co-ordinating our activities in the branch. They also represent the interests of Labour Link levy payers on the UNISON branch committee. The Labour Link Officer must be nominated by members paying into the Affiliated Political Fund/Labour Link.

The Labour Link officer will receive support, training and advice on their role and responsibilities from their regional political officer.

**Tasks relating to the post of Labour Link Officer:**

* to explain and develop the role of the UNISON Labour Link within the branch and ensure that correct procedures are followed regarding the rights of Labour Link levy payers

* to receive correspondence and information on Labour Link matters from national and regional levels and from the Labour Party
* to circulate information to Labour Link members and convene meetings of members as necessary

* to attend the UNISON branch committee and agree appropriate means of promoting UNISON policy in the party

* to organise elections for branch UNISON Labour Link representation within the regional Labour Link as necessary and ensure reports are made by branch delegates on their activities on behalf of members

* to liaise with the Labour Link regional political officer to promote

political education and policy discussions

* to strengthen links with local Labour Parties by affiliating to constituencies and electing delegates to attend meetings

* to communicate with Labour Party members within the branch and encourage individual membership of the Labour Party
* to build campaigning work around key issues and co-ordinate campaigns with the Labour Party in council, Westminster, Scotland, Wales and European elections.

**Welfare Officer**

**Tasks relating to the post of Branch Welfare Officer:-**to ensure that branch officers, stewards and workplace representatives, and also employers, have regular up-to-date information about UNISON “There For You” and its range of services

* to ensure that members seeking welfare assistance receive a prompt, supportive and effective response
* to liaise and co-ordinate with regional and national levels to ensure that UNISON support is provided effectively
* to undertake training and seek advice from UNISON “There For You” where necessary
* to develop and implement local activity
* to develop links with local charities and sources of support such as Citizen’s Advice Bureau and women’s refuges.

**Environmental Officer**

**Tasks relating to the post of Branch Environmental Officer**

* To co-ordinate the union’s green and environmental agenda in the branch.
* Represent the workforce in discussions and negotiations regarding the development and implementation of company / employer environmental policies and practices which can cover areas such as energy use, recycling, travel and procurement.
* Act on behalf of members as a link person with local environmental campaign organisations such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace or Stop Climate Chaos.

**Steward**

**Tasks relating to the post of Steward:-**

* to be the first and main point of contact for members with the union
* to recruit new members
* to work with members to establish an organised workplace
* to support and advise members on workplace issues
* to act as a spokesperson for the members they represent and for the branch
* to represent members with the employer, dependent on their experience and confidence
* to represent members within the branch committee
* to be answerable to the members they represent.