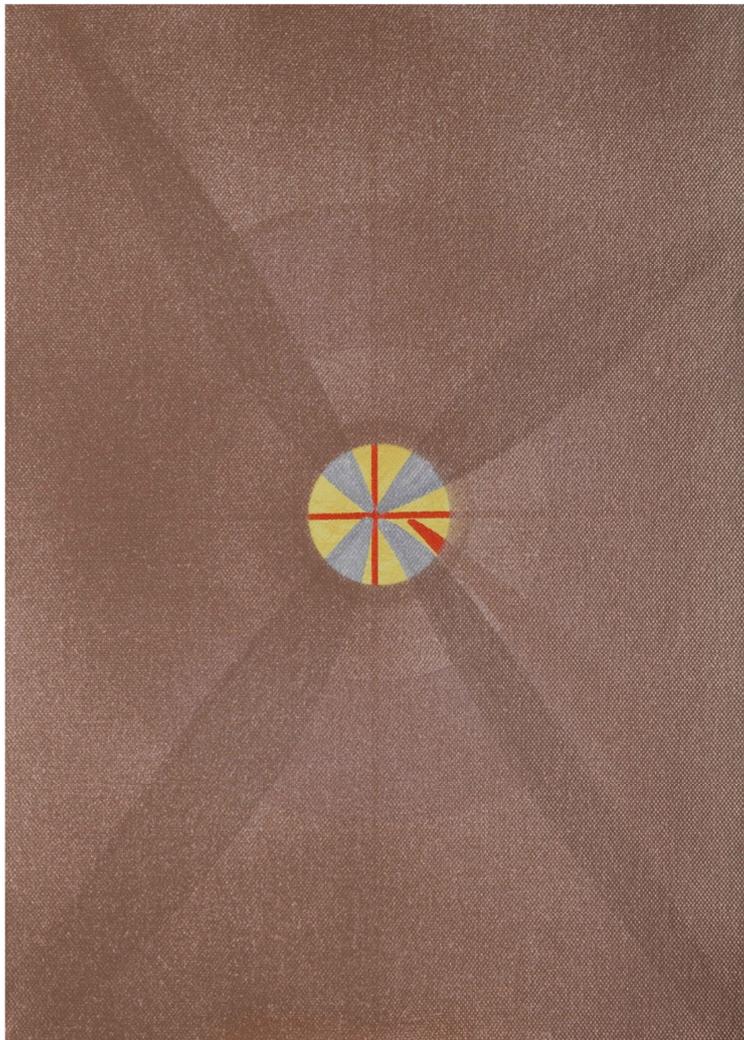




Young People, Unions and Recruitment

Initial Findings from a Research Project for TUC and Unions 21



Report Produced By: Rachel Lopata
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Cover image: Aynur Karaman

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1. Executive Summary.

The TUC and Unions 21 wished to better understand the views of young people with regard to trade unions and with regard to their recruitment approaches. A limited budget was available for this research. Given this limitation, a wholly qualitative approach was taken, comprising three group discussions with young people.

Knowledge and Perceptions of Unions.

Within this research project, young people were asked to list words and phrases that came to mind with reference to the term "trade union" in a 'word association' exercise.

There were many strong positive associations for young people. One subset of these positive associations were words and phrases that related to the kinds of work that unions undertake and the kinds of workplace issues they seek to address, for example: Campaigning, Advice, Guidance, Negotiation, Resolution, Working conditions, Workers' rights. In addition, many young people gave associations with positive concepts, principles and values which they are associated with the term trade union: Togetherness, Security, Fairness, Equality, Democracy, Like-minded, Power to the people, Knowledge, Protection, Insurance.

In line with the findings from previous research, however, a large number of associations were backward looking. These included historical references including: Margaret Thatcher, 1980's, Arthur Scargill, Miners' strike. For many, these associations went hand-in-hand with strongly negative perceptions such as: Low morale, Divided workforce, Scaremongering, Troublemakers. In addition, young people associated trade unions with direct negative impacts on their own lives - for example through transport disruption. Some associations, particularly for young people in unionised environments, referred to union activists as being 'busy-bodies' and averse to change, acting as a barrier to all management proposals. Another aspect of negative thinking was the association of unions with old-fashioned, bureaucratic and very formal ways of working.

Barriers to Joining a Union and How to Overcome Them.

The research uncovered a number of distinct and clear barriers that prevent young people from joining the union movement. These can be categorised into four main themes:

- Lack of awareness, visibility and / or understanding.
- Lack of 'push factors' - many young people stated that they were happy with their workplace and did not feel they had come across any issues which might lead them to need a union's support.
- Lack of 'pull factors' - young people found it difficult to articulate anything that would attract them to join a union. Unions were widely

seen as being impotent to affect change or improve working conditions.

- Repellent factors - cost of membership is off-putting for some, particularly for those young people who find it difficult to perceive of any tangible benefits of joining a union. Some young people find it difficult to identify with union members. Unions being seen as militant, old fashioned, bureaucratic and aggressive, turns young people off. Furthermore, there is a fear of isolation in being the only person in the workplace who might join a union.

This research sought the views of young people about how union membership could be made more appealing to them. There were calls for an increase in education and awareness-raising about unions and about what unions do.

Whilst clearly unions cannot artificially create workplace dissatisfaction, young people did feel that unions might need to highlight potential 'push' factors by publicising stories about how young people are unfairly treated by employers.

Union communications need to clearly explain the personal benefits that members will gain. Spin-off benefits of union membership were consistently highlighted by young people as a strong potential lever towards joining. Young people also considered it extremely important for unions to consider how they might create peer pressure amongst young people to join a union.

Reactions to Existing Recruitment Materials.

In general young people had doubts about the efficacy of recruitment materials for young people. The general impression of the materials shared during the research was that they were uninspiring and would not attract a young person to pick them up and read them.

A number of key principles could be drawn out from the discussion that young people had about their preferences. These can be summarised as:

- No assumptions should be made about the level of knowledge young people might have about the union movement.
- Materials that stood out in some way from the standard leaflet format were preferred.
- Leaflets with an integrated membership application form with all the necessary information provided in one place were seen as effective.
- Young people appreciated materials which sought to clarify the exact benefits to be gained from union membership.
- Leaflets and materials highlighting any immediate and tangible benefits such as discounts and special member offers were also appreciated.

2. Background and Objectives.

The TUC and Unions 21 wished to better understand the views of young people with regard to trade unions and their recruitment approaches.

This research was commissioned in order to build upon and update previous research commissioned by the TUC, and some specific unions, regarding the perceptions of unions amongst non-union members and young people in particular.

The results of this research were developed to be shared at two conferences – the TUC's Young Members' Conference and Union 21's Annual Conference - both to be held in Spring 2011. The findings will also be used to inform on-going communications and recruitment activities aimed at this specific target audience.

The objectives for the exercise were as follows:

- To understand and explore the views of a wide range of young people (ages 16--24) regarding unions, including:
 - What they understand about unions and their role.
 - Where they have gained this understanding.
 - What, if anything, they expect / need from a union.

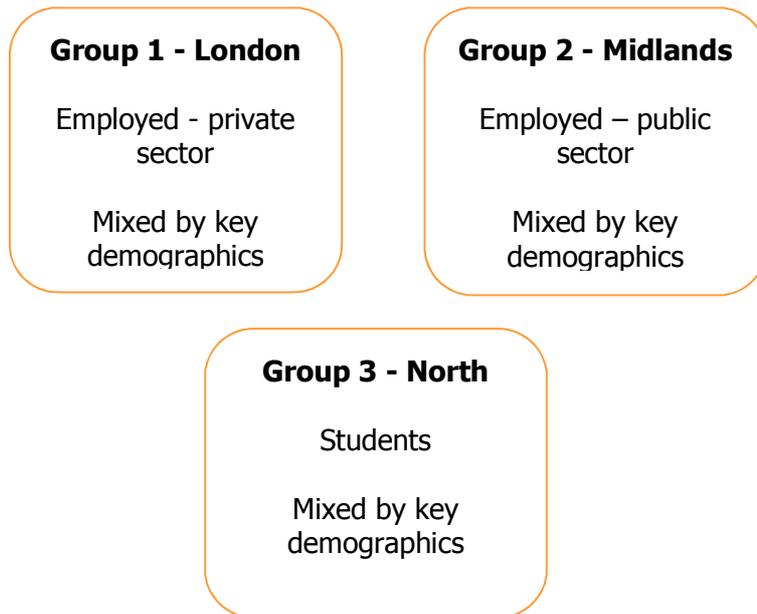
- To understand and explore the views of a wide range of young people (ages 16--24) regarding union communications including:
 - Recruitment materials.

Some additional objectives surrounded young people's views about the current deficit and the proposed public sector cuts. Findings on these elements of the research are to be published shortly.

3. Methodology.

A limited budget was available for this research. Given this limitation, a wholly qualitative approach was taken comprising three group discussions with young people.

Other groups were convened as follows:



Within each group, 10 participants were recruited. Final attendance figures were as follows:

- London - 7 participants.
- Midlands (Coventry) - 8 participants
- North (Sheffield) – 10 participants

Detailed recruitment specifications were developed for each group, to ensure sufficient coverage of young people from a wide range of backgrounds.

4. Key Findings.

4.1 Workplace Issues.

Young people in permanent employment tended to raise few workplace issues or concerns. Many stated that they felt well looked after and well-managed.

Particularly those young people working in the private sector, found it difficult to imagine having problems at work that they could not constructively raise with their own line manager or their internal HR Department.

"We're a small company, I can speak to the HR Manager if I have a problem."

London, Private Sector Worker

Even where the recession has had a clear impact on pay levels and promotion opportunities, young people tended to display a willing acceptance of their employer's approach.

"I mean, yeah, they look after me because I do my job well. None of us have had pay rises for three years but that's because there's a recession so you have to understand it."

London, Private Sector Worker

"I haven't bothered to ask for a pay rise just because I know that they're struggling so it isn't really going to happen. There's not much point asking for me, so I guess you just accept the situation because it's better than being jobless."

London, Private Sector Worker

Those in more temporary workplace situations - particularly students doing part-time jobs - did feel vulnerable to bad treatment at work. They perceived this, however, as an inevitable aspect of short term and part-time working, in sectors such as retail and catering. Young people in these situations assumed and accepted that they had next to no rights in terms of employment protection.

"When you're on a temporary contract you've got pretty much no rights. If you look at your contract they can do whatever they want to and pretty much every job you get when you're our age, it's like they'll put you on a temporary contract and they can just sack you whenever they want. So there's very little you can do really in that situation."

Sheffield, Student

A number of young people working in the public sector were experiencing restructuring and potential threats of redundancy. There was a general acceptance of the inevitability of this situation. Whilst some young people complained at poor communication regarding the impact of cuts, there were limited concerns expressed about the processes that had been experienced so far. For the most part, the exact implications of proposed cuts were as yet unclear and young people were simply waiting to see what the impact might be, before deciding whether or not to be concerned.

"You often feel like you're the last to know about things quite a lot, they make decisions and they don't tell anyone they've made them until two weeks before they take effect ... but immediate line managers are mostly fine."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

"So it's really uncertain and unclear and I just think everybody's carrying on, because there's no information coming. "

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Despite the programmes of cuts, a number of young people in public sector settings expressed confidence that most redundancies would be voluntary.

"I don't feel threatened, they're making cuts but they're not going to sack people, they're just not going to hire anyone."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

The pervading theme across all sectors was one of passive acceptance. Young people appeared to accept difficulties in the workplace as an inevitable reality of working in the modern world. There appeared to be little belief in the idea that anything would be likely to change the aspects of their working life and conditions which were less than perfect.

4.2 Knowledge and Perceptions of Unions.

When asked to spontaneously suggest who they might turn to for help or advice with a workplace issue, young people employed in public sector settings, or those who were already members of a union, suggested trade unions as a source of help.

"So if I had a problem I'd just talk to someone in my department, but the Unions are there, you know they're there if you need them."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Those working in the private sector tended instead to suggest that they would turn to the following sources for advice on employment issues:

- Parents
- Friends or colleagues
- Line managers
- HR advisers
- The Internet

"My best friend works in the HR Department so I'd probably speak to her directly."

"I'd Google it."

London, Private Sector Workers

Previous research¹ projects carried out by the TUC and some individual unions have explored perceptions of unions amongst non-members. Exercises to explore the top of mind thoughts that tend to arise when the words "trade union" are mentioned, amongst people who are not union members, have highlighted two distinct common reactions.

- Many research participants simply have no knowledge and no concept of what a trade union is, or what a trade union does.
- The second prominent reaction is one relying on historical stereotypes and images of strikes and picket lines and to talk about Arthur Scargill and Margaret Thatcher.

¹ Research carried out by Opinion Leader Research on behalf of TUC Wales, November 2006.

In previous research for TUC Wales, participants were asked to draw their thoughts on hearing the words "trade union". Two typical images are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – Typical Images from TUC Wales Research

Within this current research project, young people were asked instead to list words and phrases that came to mind with reference to the term "trade union" in a 'word association' exercise.

There were many recurring themes between the three groups. Few young people expressed a complete lack of knowledge about trade unions, although some did refer to a lack of understanding about what unions do. A minority of the associations that came through were simply:

- I don't know
- I don't understand

Neutral Associations

Many of the top of mind associations that young people gave were neither positive nor negative in nature. They simply reflected the kinds of industries, professions, companies and political affiliations that were associated with the union movement. These associations included words and phrases such as:

- Left Wing
- Labour Party
- Large companies
- British Airways

- Transport for London
- Teachers
- Fire-fighters

Positive Associations

There were many strong positive associations for young people. One subset of these positive associations were words and phrases that related to the kinds of work that unions undertake and the kinds of workplace issues they seek to address, for example:

- Wages
- Campaigning
- Advice
- Guidance
- Negotiation
- Resolution
- Working conditions
- Workers' rights

In addition, many young people gave associations with positive concepts, principles and values which they are associated with the term trade union:

- Togetherness
- Security
- Fairness
- Equality
- Democracy
- Like-minded
- Power to the people
- Knowledge
- Protection
- Insurance

Backward Looking and Negative Associations

In line with the findings from previous research, however, a large number of associations were backward looking. These included historical references including:

- Margaret Thatcher
- 1980's
- Arthur Scargill
- Miners' strike

These associations were particularly strong amongst young people from the North of England. Those members of the Sheffield focus group who had grown up in the area were very clear that memories of the miners' strike had been

passed down through the generations and remain strong in many local communities.

*"Around here it's still quite... especially if you live out towards Barnsley and Rotherham. Yeah, my mate's dad was a miner."
Sheffield, Student*

Many young people stated that their very first thoughts in association with the term 'trade union' related to industrial action:

- Strikes
- Walk-outs
- Dispute
- Picket lines
- Disagreements

For many these associations went hand-in-hand with strongly negative perceptions such as:

- Low morale
- Divided workforce
- Scaremongering
- Troublemakers

There was recognition that unions only ever make it into the public consciousness at times of industrial action:

*"They never really come to light unless there is a big massive strike on or something bad happening anyway, so you never really hear anything about them until something goes wrong. You only see them in a negative light really."
Sheffield, Student*

In addition, young people associated trade unions with direct negative impacts on their own lives - for example through transport disruption.

*"I thought, London Underground,... bastards"
London, Private Sector Worker*

Some associations, particularly for young people in unionised environments, referred to union activists as being 'busy-bodies' and averse to change, acting as a barrier to all management proposals – whether or not they might be sensible.

"I've only got one word... 'busybody' and that's probably because I associate it with the Union Rep in my office, who seems like she

just picks fault with the most pointless things that are not important."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

"They're afraid of change, I think. Like they're immediately against change and sometimes they're not always that well informed, I think there's quite a lot of scaremongering goes on."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Further negative associations were raised regarding the costs of joining a union. Unions were seen, by some, as organisations seeking their own ends, rather than working for the benefit of their members. References were made to publicity surrounding union leaders' high salaries as evidence of this:

"I think sometimes they're out for their own benefit. I mean, I saw something when they were looking at the strikes for the train driver and how much the Union leader got paid, and he got paid a hell of a lot, more than most people would ever dream of getting paid and he's supposed to be going for fairness and equality."

Sheffield, Student

Another aspect of negative thinking was the association of unions with old-fashioned, bureaucratic and very formal ways of working. This again echoed previous research carried out for the TUC, which found that young people in particular tend to believe that unions work in ways that will confuse them - with an impression of lots of paperwork, formal, minuted meetings and too much bureaucracy.

"Because it states at paragraph 3 on line 2 of the guidance that you should do something a certain way,' I think that's what comes to mind."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

4.3 Barriers to Joining a Union and How to Overcome Them.

The research uncovered a number of distinct and clear barriers that prevent young people from joining the union movement. These can be categorised into four main themes:

- Lack of awareness, visibility and / or understanding.
- Lack of 'push factors'
- Lack of 'pull factors'
- Repellent factors

These barriers are considered and explored in more detail below.

Lack of awareness, visibility and/or understanding.

Particularly for those young people working in the private sector, lack of visibility or awareness that unions are present and active in the working environment remains a major barrier for young people. They do not associate unions with private sector environments, this is particularly true for those working in small businesses.

"You'd have to be a big firm, a big company. My company has 200 people, there's no point in making a Union. Somebody who's got thousands and thousands like Sainsbury's or British Airways or so on, there might actually be a point."

London, Private Sector Worker

"It just seems that the majority of doctors, nurses, firemen, policemen, teachers are all in unions, I don't know why it is."

London, Private Sector Worker

"I didn't realise you could be part of a Union for anything, I knew for teachers and hospitals and medical, but I didn't know for any job there was any union."

Sheffield, Student

In addition, many young people felt that they knew little about the union movement, what it does and how it works. When asked whether they had ever, or would ever, consider joining a union, it was clear that for many the thought had simply never come to their minds.

"I've actually never really thought about it before. I wouldn't say it was a priority, I've never thought about it."

Sheffield, Student

Lack of 'push factors.'

As has already been highlighted at Section 4.1, many young people stated that they were happy with their workplace and did not feel they had come across any issues which might lead them to need a union's support. The pervading attitude of passive acceptance, even where workplace issues were identified, also meant that few young people felt the palpable need of a union in their workplace. Many of those participating in the research stated that they trusted their line managers and their HR departments to treat them fairly and to offer them good advice.

There was some evidence that young people felt that, so early in their careers, there was little point in them joining a union. These assertions tended to be based upon an underlying assumption that joining a union would only be done in order to protect oneself from the threat of redundancy. Based on this underlying

assumption, young people rejected the idea of joining a union for two main reasons:

- They saw their current roles as short-term and had few concerns about job security for this reason. They expected to move jobs and companies within a relatively short period of time and therefore saw union membership as neither relevant nor practical.

"I think it's more beneficial for someone who's investing in their long term career.....I don't think people that are doing a job for like a year and then moving to another job, really care."

London, Private Sector Worker

"If it's a proper career that you're starting it's worth it, if it's what you want to do, not just a temp job."

Sheffield, Student

- At this point in their lives they do not have dependents relying upon them and thus job security is not as vital.

"I'm not worried about job security right now or 'oh my God, I've got a whole family I need to feed and I need the support behind me and what not', it's sort of 'okay, if it goes, something else will come up'."

London, Private Sector Worker

Lack of 'pull factors.'

In addition to this absence of drivers towards unions, many of the young people found it difficult to articulate anything that would attract them to join a union. Unions were widely seen as being impotent to affect change or improve working conditions. The widespread tendency towards passive acceptance of workplace issues; went alongside a feeling that unions could achieve little in the modern working environment.

"If you only have a temporary contract they can do whatever they want to you pretty much, they just show you your contract and say 'actually you've got no rights whatsoever, see you in a bit'."

Student, Sheffield

"If I ever had an issue where ... someone might call a union representative I feel like I've got colleagues and people around me that could do that and would actually do it better than some of the union representatives I know of."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Within the unionised environment of the public sector, those young people who were not members of unions expressed concern that unions seem to concentrate on minor issues and petty concerns. This was partly attributed to the perception that unions had little power to truly impact any of the big or important issues.

"Just picking fault with things that aren't important issues and any important issues seem to get bypassed, they're more interested in the petty office dramas than important issues."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

"Now there's kind of a struggle, the unions don't seem to have the same place as they did, I think that's where the pettiness came from, it's like trying to fight any fight just to have a fight to show that you've still got some kind of power."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Repellent factors.

Going beyond the lack of factors to attract young people towards unions, some young people pointed to factors that acted to repel them from the idea of joining a union. These factors, once again, echoed previous research carried out for TUC². Clearly, cost of membership is off-putting for some, particularly for those young people who find it difficult to perceive of any tangible benefits of joining a union.

Some young people find it difficult to identify with union members, feeling that those who are members of unions are different to them. Images in the media of those representing unions tend to show older people and mostly men. This perpetuates the perception amongst younger people, and younger women in particular, that unions are not for 'people like me'.

"It's a bit boring, people who wear brown shirts and go on caravan holidays."

London, Private Sector Worker

The range of negative and backward looking perceptions, outlined at Section 4.2 of this report, further contribute to deter young people from union activism. Unions being seen as militant, old fashioned, bureaucratic and aggressive, turns young people off.

² Research carried out by Opinion Leader Research on behalf of TUC Wales, November 2006 and for TUC and Community amongst Ladbroke's employees, October 2006.

"People just associate unions with striking and nuisance on the Underground and things like that."

London, Private Sector Worker

Furthermore, there is a fear of isolation in being the only person in the workplace who might join a union. Young people in non-unionised environments are concerned about how their managers might view them, if they independently sought out union membership.

"It can sometimes cause more harm than good though especially if you're a Union Rep in the workplace and management look on you like you're out to cause trouble rather than it's a safety net, they think you're looking for things to make a point of."

Sheffield, Student

To take this point further one young person in the London discussion group saw positive advantages to remaining removed from union activity:

"Maybe if you're not in a union and everyone strikes and you don't, you'll get promoted and they won't."

London, Private Sector Worker

Overcoming the Barriers

This research sought the views of young people about how union membership could be made more appealing to them. The ideas generated within the focus groups, were varied and addressed many of the key barriers identified.

There were calls for an increase in **education and awareness-raising** about unions and about what unions do. This was seen as a fundamental requirement if any activity to increase union membership amongst young people were to be successful. Many young people knew little about unions other than what they saw or heard via the media, which tended to focus on individual industrial action campaigns. Those young people who had studied modern history, politics or economics tended to know more about unions, but in many cases this knowledge focused not on the current place of unions in the modern working environment, or on the benefits of union membership, but on the union struggles for 1980s.

"We said education is a key thing. You look out of us and there's not many people know about it, we've all got the same view that it's pretty negative."

Sheffield, Student

Unions, it was felt, would need to start with the basics - explaining what they are, what they do, how they do it and why. Outreach programmes in schools were considered to be an effective way of achieving this. Young people felt strongly that unions could be doing a better job of educating children about the role and benefit of unions whilst they were still at school.

"And looking at some of the stuff you learn like PSHE at school, even now it's pathetic ... and a thing that's useful to know about life,... like Unions and what they actually do, try and get it into schools I think would be quite key. You've got to do like Citizenship lessons, to build it into that would be like a perfect slot essentially."

Sheffield, Student

In addition, colleges and universities were seen as potentially fertile ground for union awareness-raising. The **National Union of Students** was seen to have a potentially unique role in converting students into future union members.

"NUS tend to send you stuff while you're a student, it just automatically switches and then you see some kind of offer or something for you to then be part of another union."

Sheffield, Student

Whilst, clearly, unions cannot artificially create workplace dissatisfaction, young people did feel that unions might need to highlight potential 'push' factors by publicising **stories about how young people are unfairly treated** by employers. It was acknowledged that those who had never experienced poor treatment could tend towards complacency or assume that there is nothing that can be done in the face of unfair treatment. Using real-life case studies, unions would potentially be able to persuade young people that they need the protection of a union. Young people compared this approach to the advertisements for personal injury lawyers on television, which they saw as persuasive, even though they may also be irritating.

"Just like an example of something that's happened that's either going to make you laugh or think wow, that is a problem."

London, Private Sector Worker

"Show people that companies can mess you about."

Sheffield, Student

"I was thinking of that advert where the woman walks into work and slips over. Yeah, I was thinking about that. She sues them for about three grand. That's what I mean, and they're just quite

annoying. But you remember it sort of, because I had that in my mind as well."

London, Private Sector Worker

Union communications need to clearly explain the **personal benefits** that members will gain. **Value for money** needs to be proven through this messaging, ensuring that young people are persuaded that the investment is worthwhile. Again, **real stories of success** that unions have had, in helping young people overcome workplace difficulties were suggested as an effective message to deliver.

"Make it more relevant to me – what can a union do for me? I don't feel it affects me."

London, Private Sector Worker

"When we were recruited they came in, and I know a lot of companies don't do this, but the union came in, sent a representative, and did about an hour and a half presentation on all the positive things, all the benefits you get and they gave all past cases they'd dealt with. All good ones, of course, all ones that were successful, and then they sort of pushed the form in front of you and said if you want to sign up."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Spin-off benefits of union membership were consistently highlighted by young people as a strong potential lever towards joining. Commercial partnerships, relevant **product discounts and other perks** were considered to be highly persuasive. Emphasis was placed on the need for any such schemes to be well targeted towards the needs and preferences of young people. The right discount schemes were seen as offering more universal appeal than the general concept of workplace protection.

"That's the reason people join the National Students Union, I think in Sixth Form because you get a discount at Pizza Hut and Top Man. That's the only reason any of my friends have done it."

Sheffield, Student

"I didn't join them knowing and thinking I want to join a Union, it was justyou get all discounts and stuff when you do it."

London, Private Sector Worker and Union Member

Young people considered it extremely important for unions to consider how they might **create peer pressure** amongst young people to join a union. There was a feeling that joining a union as an individual was not something a young person

was likely to do. Unions would do well to emphasise the popularity of union membership amongst other young people. Recruitment efforts within workplaces should seek to encourage groups of young workers to join together and at the same time. This would combat the fear of isolation, as well as creating peer pressure and a sense of union membership as a **social norm**.

"Feel like it's a society because if let's say one or two people don't and the rest of them and you're in that team, you want to feel part of it, you don't want to feel left out."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

"Make it seem more the norm for young people – with stats – like 500,000 people under 25 joined the union last year...did you?"

Sheffield, Student

In addition to the idea of recruiting in groups, some young people suggested that unions would benefit from offering **free or discounted initial joining periods**. This would allow new young workers to experience the benefits of being part of the union, without cost in the first instance. It was felt that this would not only create long-term members because inertia would mean that young people would be unlikely to rescind membership at the end of their first year, but also because the benefits of membership would become clear during the trial period.

"If you get a lot of people joining, say when you first go into your job they say 'free for the first year' because a lot of people wouldn't bother quitting especially if its helped them out with something, they'll stay on for that reason."

Sheffield, Student

"It's like when you get a mobile phone, you get the insurance free for the first month and then you can cancel it if you want, but half the time you don't even get round to doing it."

Sheffield, Student

The importance of **union reps** as both a barrier and a potential positive persuasion factor towards union membership, was apparent through the discussions with the public sector workers. In these unionised environments the union rep becomes the union personified. Union reps who are aggressive, petty or scaremongering dissuade young people from joining. Conversely, union reps could very much have the power to persuade young people that the union movement is for them.

"So we talked about Just basically making the Reps themselves more approachable because I think a lot of Reps are quite scary. A couple of us mentioned about the Reps being aggressive or just angry for no reason."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

4.4 Reactions to Existing Recruitment Materials.

A range of existing hardcopy union recruitment materials was shared with the young people during the focus group discussions. A different range of materials from a variety of unions was shared with each group. Young people were asked to give their reactions to the materials stating what was appealing and unappealing about the leaflets and booklets provided.

Recruitment materials were shared that had been developed by the following unions:

- ATL
- BECTU
- The Musicians Union
- USDAW
- NASUWT
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
- Prospect

In general young people had doubts about the efficacy of recruitment materials for young people. The general impression of the materials shared was that they were uninspiring and would not attract a young person to pick them up and read them with interest.

"To be honest, most of these look like they belong in a doctor's surgery. The type of colours, the format of it, is something you'd read out of boredom if you were sitting in a hospital or a doctor's surgery, rather than something you may pick up on your way out somewhere."

London, Private Sector Worker

This was to some extent a function of the format itself rather than the specific design and content. Young people felt that television and face-to-face promotion activities were far more likely to get the message across to young people.

"Think about it, when was the last time anyone read a leaflet?"

London, Private Sector Worker

Nevertheless, the materials shared varied quite considerably from one another and a number of key principles could be drawn out from the discussion that

young people had about their preferences and the leaflets that appealed to them the most. The first of these was the importance of **making no assumptions about the level of knowledge** young people might have about the union movement. Some leaflets were criticised because young people felt that there was a lack of basic explanatory information. Some leaflets were seen as lacking clarity, in one example the front of the leaflet could only be effective if a person already knew the union by name and already had understanding of what a union is and what it does.

"If you're glancing at something, that just says 'better together', you don't really know what that is."

Sheffield, Student

Young people responded positively to **materials that stood out** in some way, from the format of a standard leaflet. For example, some young people particularly liked The Musicians Union newspaper format simply on the basis that it stood out from the crowd.

"I really like the Musician's thing, it's got pictures, people are going to read it, I'd read it just out of interest. A couple of the captions on the pictures I read and kind of smiled at and it's not too forceful."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Some young people liked the approach of leaflets with an **integrated membership application** form, since they felt this meant that all the necessary information was provided in one place. It was felt that young people would be more likely to join a union if it was made as easy as possible. One young person suggested going even further to make the process of completing the form as simple and immediate as possible:

"I think this is actually the most effective for the fact that once you've finished reading it you just fill it out there and send it off, it's all there and it's ready to go. So for young people referring them to an internet site, asking them to go off and go somewhere else and do something it's probably like 'oh, forget that'. If you've got a pen there, maybe if it came with a pen as well."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker

Young people appreciated materials which sought to clarify the **exact benefits** to be gained from union membership. Material such as ATL's 'What's in it for me?' and CSP's 'Join Us' pamphlet containing 10 good reasons to join, were

seen as good examples. In addition, young people picked out materials that offered examples and case studies of unions helping people:

"Yeah, that one's good because you can just flick through it and it does give you ten reasons why you might want to."

Sheffield, Student

"This one has a couple of good case studies about a guy who was awarded £9,000 damages for vibration white finger."

London, Private Sector Worker

Leaflets and materials highlighting any **immediate and tangible benefits** such as discounts and special member offers were also seen as appealing, given that young people generally saw these kinds of offers as an important way of enticing potential young members.

"I suppose that's what younger people want to see, they want to see what they're getting, they think I'm getting this, I'm getting that."

Coventry, Public Sector Worker