



prospect bectu



# Reps' Handbook

An introduction to  
the role of a Prospect  
representative

[prospect.org.uk](http://prospect.org.uk)

# Reps' Handbook

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>	Getting organised	20
Get the most out of this guide	1	<b>7 Communicating with your members</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1 Becoming a rep</b>	<b>3</b>	Prospect's eBranch system	21
What is a rep?	3	Employer's email system and internal mail	21
Why become a rep?	3	Top tips for communicating with members	22
What skills will you need?	4	<b>8 Dealing with members' queries</b>	<b>23</b>
How to become a rep	4	Members' benefits and services	23
How much of your time will it take?	4	Legal services	23
Can I be disciplined or otherwise disadvantaged by being a rep?	4	Work-related problems	23
You are not alone!	4	Personal cases	23
<b>2 Support from Prospect</b>	<b>5</b>	Keep it local	24
Training and development	5	Complex problems	24
Our organising team	5	Member Contact Centre	24
Support	5	Personal injury cases	24
Expertise	5	<b>9 Meetings</b>	<b>25</b>
Networking	6	Members' meetings	25
Working for freelancers	6	Committee meetings	25
Rate cards	6	Ensuring your meetings are inclusive	25
Recruitment resources and guides	6	Annual meetings	25
Our website	6	Agenda and papers	26
Member and rep email updates and newsletters	7	Minutes	27
<b>3 Time off for your Prospect activities</b>	<b>8</b>	Claiming expenses	27
Time-off agreements	8	Checklist for organising a meeting	27
Paid or unpaid?	8	<b>10 How Prospect works</b>	<b>28</b>
Informal roles	9	Prospect's objectives	28
Time off for training	9	Union structure	28
<b>4 Different types of rep</b>	<b>10</b>	Members	28
Local representatives	10	Branches	29
Workplace contact	10	National executive committee	29
Branch officers	11	Sector executive committees	29
Functions of branch officers	11	Bectu divisions	30
President/chair/convener	11	Networks	30
Vice-president/chair	11	Retired members' group	30
Secretary	11	National conference	30
Membership and recruitment secretary	12	Standing orders committee (SOC)	30
Branch organiser	12	Conference motions	30
Treasurer	12	Conference and branch timetable	30
Reps with specific legal rights	12	<b>11 Data protection guidance for reps</b>	<b>31</b>
Health and safety rep	12	Data Protection Regulations	31
Union learning rep	13	Your rights under UK GDPR	31
Other specialist reps	13	Data Protection Terms	31
What kind of material does Prospect suggest I hold as a rep?	14	The Six Principles of Data Protection	32
Prospect structure	15	Guidance	32
<b>5 Recruiting and retaining members</b>	<b>16</b>	Retention Policy	33
Recruitment	16	Data Breach	33
Member recruit Member	16	Checklist	33
Focus on the positives	16	Prospect Data Protection Compliance Officer	33
Excuses for not joining	17	E-Branch System	33
Retaining members	17	<b>12 Contacting Prospect</b>	<b>34</b>
Keeping your records up-to-date	18	Regional offices	34
Changes to officers and reps	18	Member Contact Centre	34
Online access to your branch records	18	MCC – Helpdesk	34
<b>6 Organising</b>	<b>19</b>	MCC – Membership	34
What is 'organising'?	19	Web chat	35
Organising around issues	19		



# Introduction

**Mike Clancy**  
Prospect general secretary



This handbook is an introduction to the role of a Prospect representative. It provides the basic information that you need to make the most of your role in the union.

You may be reading it after having been elected or appointed as a new representative, or you may just be thinking of stepping forward and becoming active in the union. Either way, we hope you find it useful.

## Why reps are so important

It is often said that a union is its members, and this is, of course, true. But it is just as meaningful to say that a union is its representatives: the active members who give their time to protect and advance the interests of their colleagues.

With more than 4,000 reps and around 250 paid staff, we would not be able to do the work and provide the service that we do without these reps.

Reps are crucial in getting members' views heard at local and national level. They:

- listen and act on workplace priorities
- represent members if they have a problem at work
- help to ensure workplace fairness
- recruit potential members
- monitor health and safety.

Prospect's ability to achieve positive change in the workplace doesn't just depend on well-reasoned arguments. It springs from strong organisation – without that, our influence declines.

## Get the most out of this guide

To the uninitiated, the union's structures and procedures may seem confusing. This handbook will help you work out where your role fits in and where you can find the support you need to serve your members effectively.

This is not a comprehensive guide to everything you need to know as a rep. But it covers the fundamental things you should

be aware of, and points you in the right direction if you need more information. It is part of a wider package of resources available from Prospect including:

- our team of organisers
- our education programme
- other Prospect reps, in your own branch and throughout the union
- the websites ([www.prospect.org.uk](http://www.prospect.org.uk) and [www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk))
- other publications.

If you have any questions which the handbook does not answer, please contact our organising team at [organisation@prospect.org.uk](mailto:organisation@prospect.org.uk).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Clancy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike Clancy, General Secretary

## Becoming a rep



## What is a rep?

Every rep is a key link between the union and its members.

At the most basic level, a rep might simply distribute union literature to a group of members in their workplace. At the other end of the spectrum, a rep might handle personal cases and negotiate pay.

A number of other roles fall between the two extremes and all of them make an important contribution to the union's work.

Some roles involve the basic activities of running a branch – arranging and attending meetings, recruiting and organising or keeping members informed. Others deal with specific issues such as training and development, equalities, pensions, environmental policies or corporate social responsibility.

We are always conscious that reps are volunteers. Some can give a little, others can give a lot. Each person must find their own boundaries. But to most people, the role of a local representative includes one or more of the following elements:

- **Advice:** not necessarily able to answer all the questions, but knowing where to look for the answers.
- **Representation and advocacy:** standing by a member's side or speaking on their behalf.
- **Negotiation:** helping to improve local working conditions.
- **Liaison and consultation:** passing information upwards, downwards and sideways; representing members' views to management.
- **Organisation:** organising the branch, strengthening its position in the workplace.
- **Democracy:** representing members' views in developing the union's policies.

Some reps fulfil just one of these functions. Others, with experience and the appropriate support from Prospect, can fulfil all of them. It is for you to choose the level of your involvement.

## Why become a rep?

Members join because they want the union to protect or improve their pay and conditions in their working lives. This is unlikely to happen without an organised approach. An active local rep can make a real difference by helping to:

- improve pay and conditions
- protect people's rights at work
- encourage fairness in the workplace
- promote a healthy and safe work environment
- help people gain access to training and career development.

There are lots of reasons why members become reps:

*"Prospect helped me when I had a work-related problem. I thought maybe I could do the same for somebody else."*

*"I was frustrated that management tried to make changes without consulting us; becoming a rep and helping to build an active branch was the only way to tackle this."*

*"One of my colleagues persuaded me to get involved – he said the branch needed someone to produce a newsletter, and he knew I had the necessary skills."*

*"I've always believed in advocacy and representation."*

*"I wanted my employer to introduce a decent workplace environmental policy; the best way to achieve this was through the union."*

*"I seized the chance to be an active part of the workplace community; I like knowing what's going on!"*

*"It was a chance to develop new skills that would be useful to me in the wider workplace and for career development."*

## What skills will you need?

All reps should have a basic understanding of the services Prospect provides to members. Beyond that, the skills you need will depend on your role.

You can either use your existing abilities (for example if you've got good organisational skills you could be an ideal organising rep), or develop new ones through our training courses.

Many reps find they develop greater confidence and expertise if they do specialist training on areas where they are required to be active (eg pay, pensions, personal cases).

## How to become a rep

To be recognised as a union rep you need to be elected or appointed at a membership meeting. The exact procedure should be set out in your branch or section rules. If you're not sure, speak to someone who is already involved or contact Prospect's Member Contact Centre (see *chapter 12*). Your branch then needs to notify your employer. It is not for employers to pick and choose who the representatives are (although some try)!

The collective bargaining agreement between Prospect and your employer describes the arrangements for workplace

reps, including the constituencies they represent and whether time off for performing trade union duties is permitted.

## How much of your time will it take?

There is no set amount of time – it will depend on whether you are entitled to carry out union duties during work time (often called facility time), and how much of your free time you are prepared to commit. It will also be influenced by your level of involvement in trade union activities.

## Can I be disciplined or otherwise disadvantaged by being a rep?

Legislation is in place to protect trade union representatives from victimisation.

Provided you act professionally and are not in breach of the relevant disciplinary code/employee rules, you cannot be disciplined merely for trade union activity.

Many reps find that the experience they develop as a rep enhances their negotiating skills and this in turn has a positive impact on their own professional/personal development.

## You are not alone!

When you volunteer for Prospect we don't leave you to sink or swim! Prospect relies on local volunteers and we'll do everything we can to support you in your role. We provide a range of resources to help reps do their job as effectively as possible and keep them informed.



## Support from Prospect

### Training and development

Prospect runs an extensive programme of training courses, from basic through to advanced skills. Our education team can offer you guidance about the best sequence of courses to follow.

We run a one-day course called 'Reps part 1' which we recommend as the starting point for all new or potential representatives. It is held several times a year at various locations or online via Zoom/Teams, but if there are enough new reps in your branch we can arrange a course especially for your workplace.

Following on from that, we run courses on key union skills such as negotiating, representing individuals, making presentations and on a wide range of issues from employment law to equality and diversity. We also provide specialist courses covering issues like pensions and health and safety.

Full details are on our websites – where you can find out how to apply or contact your Prospect or Bectu organiser – or from [education@prospect.org.uk](mailto:education@prospect.org.uk). Visit [members.prospect.org.uk/courses/](https://members.prospect.org.uk/courses/) and <https://bectu.org.uk/training/> for more details.

### Our organising team

We employ a team of organisers who work with branches to:

- provide training and development
- help plan and implement specific recruitment and organisation campaigns
- give advice about the best way to overcome barriers to better organisation.

Organisers are available to help and support branches in building up membership and local activity. Get in touch with one of the team if you're stuck for ideas, unsure how to get something done or to discuss how they can support you and help your branch reach its objectives. You can find a list of organisers at <https://members.prospect.org.uk/your-prospect/reps/organising-team>

### Support

Prospect has highly-trained negotiators and a wealth of expertise to support you in your role. Whether it's the next step in a personal case or support for negotiating local agreements, support is just a call away.

### Expertise

The latest reports from our research team will give you new insights into the world of work. Comprehensive updates – from



pensions to employment law to tips for tackling unfairness and discrimination – give you the information you need to keep up-to-date with current legislation and best practice.

## Networking

Prospect events offer an opportunity for you to meet established representatives who share your interests. You can swap ideas and experiences and build on them for the future.

## Working for freelancers

Prospect and Bectu deliver great support to the growing freelance workforce serving the UK's creative sectors.

The union's freelance members have a wealth of services they can call on. Low-cost public liability insurance is one union benefit which ranks very highly with members. But union benefits for freelancers don't stop with PLI – we support freelance members in other ways too.

Just like members who have an employer, we provide individual representation on employment matters, including chasing monies owed.

## Rate cards

We publish rate cards that let members know the going rate for a particular job. Regular networking events help to maintain solidarity and ensure that the correct rates are paid.

Our branches are the route for members to organise themselves to negotiate collective agreements with employer groups that guarantee these rates.

Branches also act as networking hubs to keep freelance members in touch with others – and we offer specific training to support reps in these branches.

We also offer other training to help members keep their skills up in a competitive jobs market.

## Recruitment resources and guides

Our organisers have a range of national recruitment leaflets and can help you write, design and print leaflets for your branch or even a specific workplace. We also have display stands that you can use at special events and promotional materials to raise the union's profile in your workplace.

All our publications are available from the central services department at New Prospect House. You can also download them in PDF format from our website:

- **Members' guides**
- **Factcards**
- **Rep's and negotiator's guides**
- **Leaflets and posters**

## Our website

Our website is packed with resources to help you in your day-to-day union activities, from finding the next training course or creating an eBranch for your branch.

The site has three main levels of content: public, members-only and reps-only. Members have to register and create a personal password before they can log in for the first time. On subsequent visits, they can log in using their membership number or email address, plus their personal password.

The website should recognise if you are a rep: when you log into the welcome page, you should see this as your membership status, followed by a list of the roles you hold. If not, your branch or section secretary should contact the membership team to confirm your status as a rep and make sure it is noted on your record.

Once you're logged in, you can check and amend the basic details on your membership record such as your name, address, phone number, email address and employer. You can also sign up to our networks, customise some of your website settings and change your login details.



## Member and rep email updates and newsletters

We compile a monthly email update which is sent to all members and an email update for reps which goes out six times a year. Our research team also provides regular information for reps on pay and health and safety.

We also produce newsletters or email updates for members in our main sectors and industries: aviation, defence, education, media and entertainment, public services, renewable energy and our young workers' network.



## Time off for your Prospect activities

The value of trade union reps and their roles is recognised in UK law. Employers, too, understand that union reps do valuable work. There's hard evidence that Prospect reps add value – our research shows tangible cost savings for employers who recognise Prospect.

Employers are legally obliged to consult collectively with staff in the event of employment changes, including redundancies and transfers – and it's simpler to negotiate with an existing, established and representative union.

### Time-off agreements

The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 recognised the rights of trade union reps to undertake their role and the need for reasonable paid time off and resources to undertake it.

Most Prospect branches will have local agreements that reflect this, sometimes called a 'Facilities Agreement'. This will include some or all of the following:

- which reps are eligible for time off work
- amount of time off permitted, or how this will be decided
- what the time off can be used for
- additional resources included (eg office space, stationery, noticeboards, provision of staff lists).

Ask your branch secretary for details of time off arrangements in your organisation. ACAS ([bit.ly/acas-time-off-guide](https://www.acas.gov.uk/time-off)) sets the standards on time off for trade union reps in the UK, but most Prospect agreements will be better than the statutory minimum. Contact your Prospect negotiator for advice if you do not have a facilities agreement in your organisation.

### Paid or unpaid?

There is an important distinction between different kinds of union activity. Reps have a statutory right to be paid for union duties (usually activities directly related to Prospect's work within your organisation, such as representing members or seeking their views).

If your employer recognises Prospect, our training courses nearly always qualify for paid time off work.

Union responsibilities (such as attending Prospect conferences or seminars) may qualify for paid time off in your local agreement. Always check with your branch if you are not sure of your position.

## Informal roles

Some members prefer to contribute more informally, as 'contact points' for example, rather than becoming a fully-fledged rep. Prospect welcomes whatever contribution members are able to make. However, you will not be eligible for time off work, whether paid or unpaid, unless your branch notifies your employer that you are engaged in union activity.

## Time off for training

Paid time off is allowed for industrial relations training relevant to a representative's duties.

Prospect considers that all its training and education programme falls within this definition.

If you experience any obstacles to release, please notify your Prospect full-time officer or the education team.



## Different types of rep

Not all reps have a recognised job description. Some can simply be described as local representatives: the face of the union in a particular workplace or location. But others have very specific responsibilities, usually defined in the branch rules.

### Local representatives

Well-organised branches usually develop a network of local representatives to undertake a range of tasks, depending on the type of branch or workplace. These include:

- acting as a focal point for Prospect in their area
- eliciting and conveying members' views to the branch or section
- maintaining the local noticeboard
- distributing Prospect information
- ensuring non-members are approached to join, keeping a record of approaches made and, if unsuccessful, the reason
- ensuring changes in members' details and location are passed to the branch or section.

Reps with particular skills or interests may be willing to take on specific tasks such as maintaining the content of an eBranch (see page 27).

Local reps may be known by various titles – correspondence rep, or just 'Prospect rep'. In the energy supply industry sector, many are known as technical reps or TRs.

### Workplace contact

Members who might not be willing to take on the full role of elected rep can play a vital role in ensuring that the union has local contacts across its workplaces. This is not an elected position, but it is a good way for a member to gain experience or build confidence before making a further commitment. No training is required and there is no expectation to carry out other duties.

Tasks relating to the post of workplace contact include:

- being a point of contact between members and the branch
- recruiting new members or introducing new employees to a branch rep
- supporting members at work by advising them on where to seek assistance
- keeping noticeboards up to date
- distributing branch information to members.

## Branch officers

In the paragraphs that follow, for 'branch' you can read 'section' or 'sub-section' as appropriate.

## Functions of branch officers

A number of functions are defined within the union's rule book as the responsibility of specific branch officers. However these tend to be general statements covering overall responsibility for the proper running of the branch, each of which entails a large number of tasks.

Branch officer posts can be shared – responsibilities of the core branch officer posts are detailed below. 'Responsibility for a task' does not necessarily mean 'doing the task'. All branch officer posts can be split into a number of tasks and functions that can be shared by more than one person.

It is important that branch committees evaluate the time demands on each post and seek to negotiate adequate facility time with the employer to allow the bulk of trades union duties to be carried out in paid time and at no loss to the officer.

Most members who have become active within Prospect started by doing a little. Branches should seek out and encourage members who are prepared to contribute to Prospect in any way at all. Some will go on to become case handlers, health and safety representatives or branch officers, but everyone who helps makes a significant contribution to developing Prospect as a dynamic, vibrant trade union.

## President/chair/convenor

The president (or chair, or convenor in some Scottish branches) presides at all committee meetings and branch conferences and is responsible for:

- the proper conduct of the meeting
- ensuring that business is kept moving
- clarifying the issues under discussion
- ensuring that clear decisions are reached and recorded
- agreeing the agenda for meetings with the secretary
- advising the branch officers and branch committee on procedures and interpretation of rules
- working closely with the secretary to provide leadership to the branch.

In most branches, the president is an experienced rep with a wider representational role in negotiations or consultation.

## Vice-president/chair

The vice-president acts as chair in the absence of the president. Smaller branches may choose not to have a vice-president.

## Secretary

This is the key role in most branches – like a conductor leading an orchestra! The branch secretary is not expected to personally undertake all these functions (especially in larger branches) but will act as the strategic lead officer and co-ordinator within the branch.

The functions include branch development, communications, meetings, record keeping, support and correspondence.

The secretary will encourage partnership working within the branch committee and the development of new representatives; and manage the delegation of work to other branch officers and branch staff as appropriate, while providing support and guidance.

The secretary's duties include:

- **Meetings**
  - calling branch committee meetings, branch conferences or annual general meetings and making all associated practical arrangements
  - preparing and circulating agendas, minutes and action lists
  - during meetings, assisting the president/chair by presenting information and introducing items for which they are responsible
- **Records**
  - ensuring the branch forwards applications for membership speedily and accurately and maintains records
- **Correspondence**
  - dealing with correspondence
  - submitting to the committee matters referred to him/her by Prospect headquarters or by any member or body with which the branch is associated
- **Developing the branch**
  - guiding the branch's development by preparing and implementing a branch organisation and development plan
  - ensuring that branch members are aware of opportunities to participate in the activities of the wider union
- **Communications**
  - ensuring regular communication with the members of the branch with news of campaigns, negotiations, issues, branch developments and activities

- communicating with the union’s regional and head offices on behalf of the branch
- **Supporting branch colleagues**
  - supporting, mentoring and encouraging branch members – both individually and collectively. The branch secretary should seek to meet each branch committee member on a one-to-one basis, to discuss issues and workplace organisation, every six months.

Some branches have an assistant secretary or minutes secretary to help with administration. In most branches, the secretary is an experienced rep with a wider representational role in negotiations or consultation.

## Membership and recruitment secretary

A membership and recruitment secretary’s duties include:

- organising recruitment in the branch and reporting regularly to the branch committee on this
- working with the branch committee to develop and implement its organisation and development plan
- maintaining local membership records and mapping the branch’s membership in order to identify membership density and rep coverage
- monitoring the branch’s joiners and leavers
- where relevant, keeping in close touch with sections about their membership position and helping them to organise their recruitment effort
- making recommendations to the branch committee on recruitment activities, targets, resources, budgets, etc
- liaising with Prospect headquarters on recruiting eligible people into membership.

Prospect encourages branches to develop the membership secretary role into that of an organiser, placing more emphasis on membership growth and the health of the union’s organisation in the workplace. Some branches split the role and have both posts.

## Branch organiser

The additional duties of a branch organiser include:

- mapping the workplace: establishing how many non-members there are and where
- organising and co-ordinating recruitment campaigns
- overseeing the network of local reps and identifying gaps and training needs
- developing and maintaining a branch development plan

which summarises the objectives and actions needed to strengthen organisation and increase membership.

## Treasurer

The treasurer’s duties include:

- the proper use, custody and accounting of the funds allocated to the branch by the national executive committee, including paying branch expenses
- preparing an annual income and expenditure account, making up a balance sheet to 31 December of each year and submitting it for audit in time for the branch’s annual conference or meeting
- supplying any additional information on finance needed by Prospect headquarters where relevant, transmitting to section treasurers money allocated by the branch committee.

## Reps with specific legal rights

Two types of representative exist on a statutory basis, ie they have specific rights under the law.

## Health and safety rep

Employers are required to create a culture of cooperation on health and safety, engaging with staff to ensure people go home safe and well from their work.

Evidence shows effective union health and safety reps help halve accidents and ill health and demonstrate the positive difference unions can make. To find out more, or how to get involved, see Prospect’s health and safety webpages or email [safetyreps@prospect.org.uk](mailto:safetyreps@prospect.org.uk).

The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 allow unions to appoint health and safety representatives to get involved for the benefit of their colleagues.

It is the responsibility of the health and safety rep to:

- increase members’, health and safety representatives’ and branch officers’ awareness of health and safety issues
- organise the information held by the branch on health and safety
- co-ordinate the activity of health and safety representatives; organise regular meetings of health and safety representatives to exchange information and consider priorities
- be closely involved in all negotiations with the employer on matters related to health and safety

- advise the branch committee on health and safety issues in the branch and to recommend policies and priorities
- act as a link between the health and safety representatives and other branch representatives to ensure that health and safety is treated as an integral part of the branch's work.

Where branches appoint health and safety reps, they must notify their employer so that these reps are afforded rights to:

- inspect the workplace
- escalate unresolved health and safety concerns
- engage in health and safety planning, consultation and auditing
- investigate serious incidents, work illnesses and complaints
- meet an inspector during a visit.

BECTU's webpage is at [www.bectu.org.uk/get-involved/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-guidance](http://www.bectu.org.uk/get-involved/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-guidance)

## Union learning rep

Union learning reps have specific legal rights and powers. Branches appoint union learning representatives whose duties are to:

- promote training and development in the workplace by providing advice and information on learning initiatives
- make sure all new reps and health and safety representatives receive initial information and guidance about their duties, eg reps' handbook, rulebook, agreements, etc
- ensure untrained reps, health and safety representatives and other branch officers enrol onto appropriate training courses
- support members who want to review and broaden their portfolio of skills
- help to identify sources of training or learning provision
- act as a confidential sounding board for individuals on development issues
- work in partnership with the employer to meet the skills and learning needs of individuals and the organisation
- give feedback on members' views and experiences of learning at work to the branch and the employer
- raise the profile of training and development on the bargaining agenda
- establish a plan of training for activists and to produce an annual budget to meet its costs.

## Other specialist reps

Branches often appoint reps to deal with specific issues.

### Equality rep

All Prospect representatives should promote equality and challenge discrimination in their union role. Equality reps are not expected to be experts on all equality matters, but they should lead and co-ordinate the branch's equality work, share good practice and keep other branch reps updated on developments.

Key tasks for the equality rep include:

- being the central liaison point for equality in the branch
- distributing information on equality issues
- promoting an equality dimension in all the branch's work, including bargaining
- advising branch officers and the branch committee on proportionality and fair representation, including in branch elections
- acting as a mentor to new equality reps and helping them identify their training needs.

Prospect provides training on issues such as discrimination law, equal pay audits, neurodiversity and unconscious bias.

### Pension rep

These reps act as a point of contact for members' pension queries. Pensions is a detailed and technical area so their role is often to direct members to the appropriate workplace or union contact if they cannot answer the query themselves. They also work to raise the profile of pension issues in their branch.

### Environmental rep

These reps act as a conduit between management and members. Their aim is to raise awareness and participate in initiatives to minimise consumption, optimise resources, source materials sustainably and dispose of waste responsibly. They also participate in formal and informal organisational structures.

### Casehandler

The majority of branches will have case handlers – these are reps who support and advise members with personal cases. We encourage all case handlers to undertake the Reps part 2 (Handling Cases) training in order to provide the most timely information and processes.



## Communications rep

As our working lives become more digitally focused, this relatively new rep role involves finding the best way to communicate with members in their branch. Traditionally it may be using noticeboards and newsletters or creating content for eBranches, work intranet pages or a social media presence etc. Please see page 21 for more details, including setting up an Ebranch.

Tasks relating to the post of branch communications officer:

- helping with efforts to recruit new members
- helping support Prospect branch campaigns
- helping to create a positive image for the branch among members, potential members and the public
- producing newsletters or bulletins for branch members
- leading on developing electronic communication with members – email, web, etc
- contacting reps for news
- updating the eBranch website and/or e-bulletins
- ensuring branch communications are in the accessible formats members need – audit for any particular requirements such as large print/Braille etc
- ensuring that nationally and regionally produced publicity and campaign materials are distributed, as appropriate, to reps, members and non-members
- monitoring local media for stories which affect the branch and take appropriate action.

## Young workers' rep

The role of the branch young workers' rep (or young members' rep in Bectu) is ideal for someone who is interested in becoming more active in the union. The post may be a stepping stone to becoming a rep or taking on wider roles.

Young workers' rep tasks include:

- recruiting new members and encouraging existing young members to become active in the branch
- making sure issues of concern to young workers are raised by the branch
- acting as a focal point for all young workers in the branch and workplaces
- receiving and distributing information to young members
- encouraging involvement in young members' campaigns
- helping young members to get organised and ensuring there are potential new young member reps for the future.

Other branch officers will help with these tasks.

Branch young worker reps must be 35 years of age and under for the whole of their term of office.

## Auditor

The role of the auditor is to act on behalf of the branch's members to ensure probity and that all branch expenditure is underpinned by democratic decisions made in accordance with Prospect's rules. A candidate for the post of auditor cannot be a member of the branch committee.

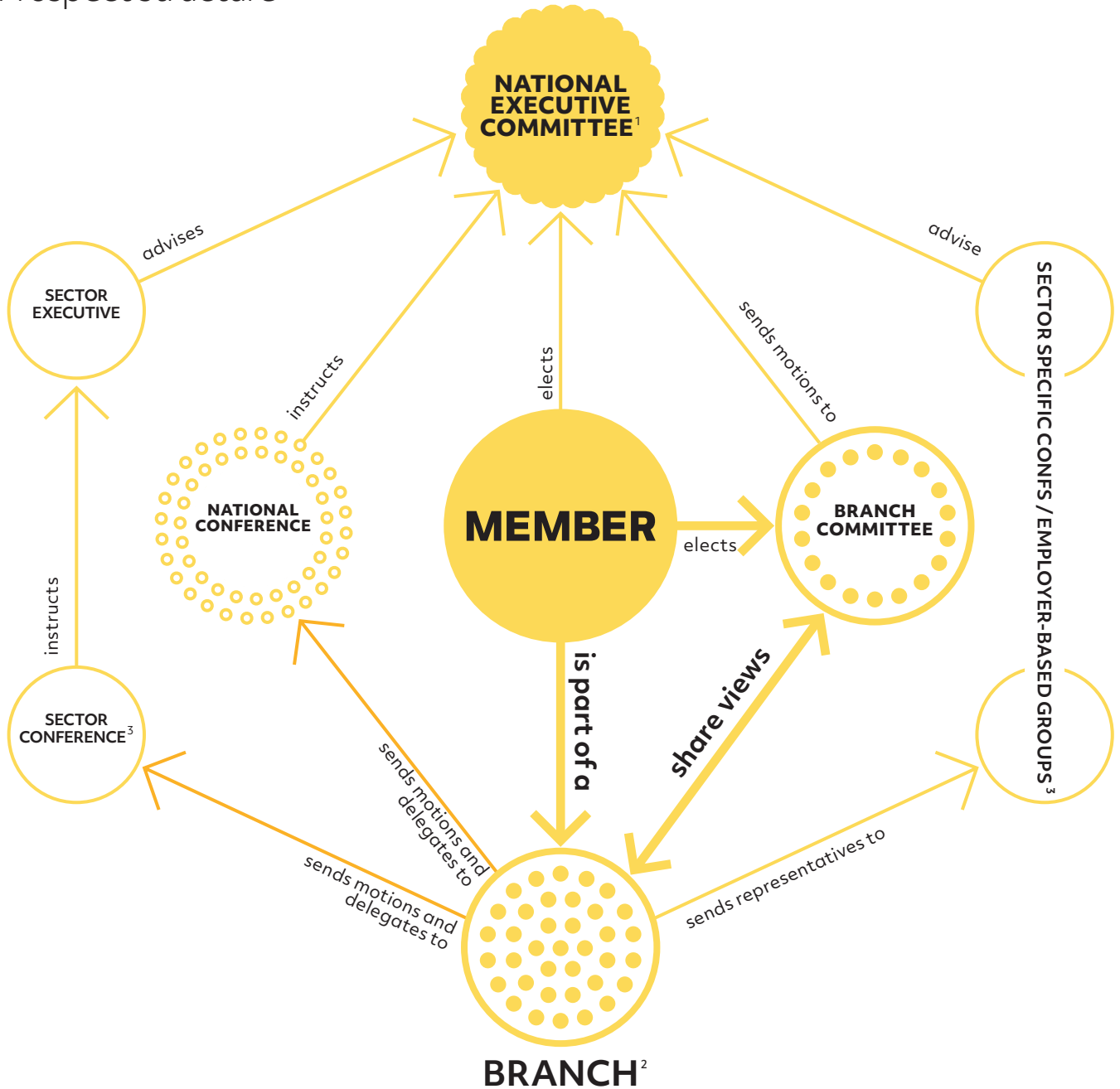
Branch auditors:

- oversee the financial records of the branch
- undertake an annual audit of the branch financial records
- provide a written report of the annual audit to the annual general meeting
- report any financial irregularities to a Prospect full-time official.

## What kind of material does Prospect suggest I hold as a rep?

Prospect suggests that you retain copies of your staff terms and conditions (eg staff handbook, policies and/or standard personal contracts) including copies of your employer's grievance and disciplinary procedures, training materials, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) policy and any relevant collective agreements.

## Prospect structure



### <sup>1</sup> NEC advisory sub-committees

The NEC has a number of **sub-committees** to help it conduct its business – communications and campaigns; equal opportunities; health and safety; organisation, recruitment and education; pensions and science, engineering and sustainability. These committees invite direct participation by branch reps.

### <sup>2</sup> Branch sections and sub-sections

Larger branches are divided into **sections**, and sometimes

**sub-sections**, with their respective **section committees** and **sub-section committees** answering to the main branch committee. In these larger branches, members will initially deal directly with the branch at section or sub-section level, with these smaller sections feeding back to the branch.

<sup>3</sup> Involvement and consultation with **sector-specific conferences** and **employer-based groups** are not a feature of all branches. See Chapter 10 for more details.



## Recruiting and retaining members

### Recruitment

Recruitment is vital. If Prospect doesn't continually recruit new members it will not survive. Natural turnover, for example through retirement, means we have to recruit at every opportunity.

We don't just want to maintain our existing membership – we want to grow. The more members we have, the stronger we are. A workplace with 90% membership is in a much stronger position to resist an unwelcome management proposal than one with 60% membership.

Organising to maintain and strengthen our voice means engaging members and recruiting your colleagues who are not in the union – all reps have the ability to do this.

The branches that are most effective at recruiting have two obvious characteristics:

- they see recruitment as a task for everybody – not just certain reps, or even all reps, but all members
- they have a high profile in the workplace: their activities, local communications and the respect in which they are held by management as well as staff mean they are central to working life in that area.

### Member recruit Member

Our Member recruit Member scheme rewards those who persuade their colleagues to join the union. For every new colleague recruited, members can choose a £10 shopping voucher or make a donation to charity.

Find out more at [prospect.org.uk/mrm](https://prospect.org.uk/mrm)

### Focus on the positives

If you ask someone why they are not in a trade union, the most common answer is that they have never been asked. Another frequent response is that the union isn't effective in their workplace. As a rep, you can help overcome both these concerns by focusing on the good things that Prospect does:

1. **We provide expert, independent advice when you need it.** As a Prospect member, you can access one-to-one employment law, contract and workplace advice at any time throughout your career.
2. **We can negotiate your pay, terms and conditions.** If we have enough members in one workplace, we will negotiate with the employer to get a better deal for everyone. We can also help individuals who might have an

equal pay claim – for example where men are paid more than women for the same work.

- 3. We support your career.** Prospect offers training, mentoring, networking and the opportunity to have a voice in your industry. With more than 142,000 members, we can connect you to other successful people in your field.
- 4. We save you money.** Prospect provides financial discounts to members that can more than cover the cost of your annual subscription. These include university discounts, collective energy switching, a free 24-hour legal line, free financial advice, insurance deals and much more.
- 5. We pay your legal fees.** Your legal fees will be paid in full if you have a good case for representation in a court or employment tribunal – for example, if you're unfairly made redundant, fired, or discriminated against. This includes the cost of counsel to represent you where required (subject to Prospect's terms and conditions for legal support).

## Excuses for not joining

If you are pre-armed with responses to some of the reasons people give for not joining the union, you will feel more confident in speaking to colleagues and counteracting their (often incorrect!) points. Prepare yourself so that you have the information ready to help them to change their minds.

### **"The subs are too high"**

Too high compared to what? Make comparisons that are relevant to the person you are speaking to. Someone who likes to socialise could be persuaded by the thought that they would get protection for the cost of a beer a week!

### **"I get the benefits anyway"**

Ask what they would do if they found themselves with an issue at work they couldn't sort out, or what would happen to them if jobs were cut. Everyone likes to think they work well and don't look for trouble; but wise people take steps to protect themselves anyway.

### **"The union doesn't do anything"**

Prospect negotiators secure terms and conditions that are way above the statutory minimum entitlements. Work goes on all the time to maintain the best possible environment for members. Point out the successes in your area.

### **"I can look after myself"**

But can they? Prospect reps and officers have insight into best practice and resolving problems in other organisations and industries. But... why not flatter the person you're talking to? If they are so good, they could help colleagues who may not be as confident by joining Prospect and becoming a rep!

### **"Management treats us well"**

Yes – because Prospect cultivates positive working relationships with employers and moves quickly to nip problems in the bud.

### **"You are always causing trouble or striking"**

Prospect always seeks negotiated solutions and uses industrial action as the very last resort. More importantly, Prospect is a member-led union so it is the members who decide. Industrial action can take place only on the basis of a majority decision in a ballot of the members directly affected.

### **"I had a problem; Prospect didn't help"**

We are often praised for the support we give to members. But we are honest about the advice we give and some issues just can't be easily resolved. Prospect will not support members with issues that arose before the joining date. That would be a bit like buying insurance after an incident has occurred!

### **"I don't believe in trade unions"**

Ask why. People often have misconceptions about unions, so listen to their reasons and bring it back to one point. Do you believe in helping people and having fairness and equality of treatment at work?

### **"I don't want to join"**

Know when to accept that and walk away. Respect their wishes.

## Retaining members

It is just as important to retain existing members. To achieve this, it is vital to communicate with them. As well as helping to recruit non-members, publicising local activities will help members feel that the union is working for them.

All resignations, or threats of resignation, should be followed up by the membership and recruitment secretary to find out

why and to rectify the problem if one exists – in many cases it will be a misunderstanding or you will be able to persuade the person to stay in membership.

If you hear a member is leaving the organisation, whether by moving to another employer or retiring, remind them that they can take their Prospect membership with them either as a full working member (as long as their new employer doesn't recognise another union) or as a retired member. Further details can be found at [prospect.org.uk/about/moving-on/](https://prospect.org.uk/about/moving-on/)

## Keeping your records up-to-date

Accurate membership records are essential. They underpin a variety of functions including ballots, distribution and bulk emails.

If your branch is planning a ballot on industrial action, it's particularly important that your records are up-to-date. It's also essential that email contact details are checked and kept up-to-date.

Individual members can check and update their own details online, and you should encourage them to do so regularly. From any part of the website once they've logged in, click the arrow to the right of their name in the login status box then select 'Edit your details'.

You can download our quick guide on how to use the first-time login process at <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2017/00521>

## Changes to officers and reps

Your branch secretary or your membership and recruitment secretary is responsible for your branch records and they need to notify the union's Member Contact Centre of any changes to your officers and reps.

You can quickly check our records of your branch and section officers and your key reps on your union contacts page. It doesn't list members of your branch executive committee or general reps such as correspondence reps. Please ask the Member Contact Centre if you want a full list of all your reps.

## Online access to your branch records

Information about trade union membership is covered by the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act (see Chapter 11). But as long as you use the information for a legitimate union purpose and do not disclose the information to a third party (including the employer), there should be no difficulty in cross-checking Prospect membership lists with locally-held staffing information.

Branch/section officers can get online access to lists of their members, leavers and joiners. For more information go to <https://members.prospect.org.uk/records>. For data protection reasons we can't make these lists available more widely than this.

The online lists are updated overnight, every night.

At a glance, you can see how many members are in your branch/section; how many have provided an email address; and how many have registered to use the website.

Download a quick guide, with screenshots, on how to use our online membership lists from <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2017/00523>

## Recruitment checklist

- Always have a supply of membership application forms to hand
- Know how to direct potential members to our online joining system
- Make sure you know the current subscription rates
- Keep supplies of key documents such as recruitment leaflets, our members' services leaflet and members' guides
- Be aware of what Prospect is doing in your workplace
- Know who is and is not a member in your area
- Encourage members to share information on what the branch is achieving.

Download our **Tips for reps – A practical guide to branch communications** – <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2020/00919>

# Organising

## What is 'organising'?

You'll notice that we often talk about recruitment and organisation in the same sentence. But what exactly does organising mean?

In an environment where some employers strongly assert their rights to the disadvantage of employees, it's crucial that union members work together to resolve issues at workplace level.

People work together in clubs, churches, schools and communities because it gets results. So working together, or organising, makes sense.

Organising is all about:

- identifying issues that will interest members and engage potential members
- involving members in decision-making on major priorities in the workplace
- supporting local workplace representatives
- developing local representatives' skills in performing their role and
- generally improving communication with members.

Prospect employs a team of organisers to help branches work in this way, see <https://members.prospect.org.uk/organisers>

## Organising around issues

This means identifying a current workplace issue that staff feel strongly about and using it as the focal point of your recruitment and organising effort.

It could be a reaction to an unpopular management proposal or a pro-active union campaign. It could be a major or an apparently trivial issue. As long as it engages the attention of staff, and Prospect is trying to do something about, it's an organising issue:

- publicise it: produce leaflets and posters, hold a meeting
- tell people what you're trying to achieve
- make sure non-members are aware that they don't have a say and can't influence the outcome unless they join.

Potential members are more likely to sign up if they see that you're working to resolve or improve something that affects them personally.

You'll also raise the union's profile among existing members and remind them of the value of their membership.

## Getting organised

Building up membership and keeping in touch with your members is vital for improving local representation and getting results in negotiations. However, the process doesn't happen all by itself. Prospect can't organise everything from the centre – we need you!

### **Be clear why you are targeting a certain group or area –**

Will it increase Prospect's membership? Will it help the union to make progress on important issues for your members?

### **What are your goals? –**

Set short and long-term objectives. Above all, be realistic. Have a plan, but be flexible – your best opportunities aren't always in Plan A or even Plan B!

### **Manage your time –**

Timing is crucial. Are you arranging a one-off event or an on-going campaign? Have a timeline to guide you if you need it.

### **Research and canvass opinion –**

Find out as much as you can about the target group and the issues facing people. Make no assumptions. Use the knowledge of people around you and don't be afraid to ask your colleagues and your organiser about experiences elsewhere.

### **What resources can you use? –**

Remember that your members are resources and different people have different skills. Will your employer support you too? Great if they do! Make sure to ask...

**Share the work out –** Volunteers on your committee can share organising tasks, from simply communicating with members to arranging meetings and escalating actions. You probably can't be in every one of your members' workplaces – but you can have your people there!

**Build relationships –** Everywhere! And with everyone who could help you: managers, Prospect officers, organisers and Prospect volunteers in your own branch. Don't wait until you need something specific – it's always easier to approach someone in a time of need if you've contacted them before.

**Keep momentum –** Once you have something going, keep energy levels as high as you can – refresh communications, think of new angles, involve new people. The more varied your communications, the more people you are likely to get interested.

**Review and plan for the future –** Be honest about the challenges you faced and what worked and what didn't. Talk things through and learn for next time. Don't be disheartened if some ventures don't work out: you learn valuable lessons from failure as well as success!

**Thanks –** Don't forget to thank those around you who played a part, no matter how small. Give yourself praise too, and celebrate your achievements.

# Communicating with your members



In a well-organised workplace, members know what the union is doing. They're kept informed about progress with major issues and they're constantly reminded about the smaller, but equally important, matters that the union deals with on their behalf.

Yet it's easy to overlook the importance of good communications. Whether you're negotiating a major new workplace policy or handling a number of smaller tasks, you can get so caught up in the process that you forget to take time to report back to members.

But if you don't tell members what you're doing, you're missing an opportunity to raise the union's profile.

Every Prospect branch should have an effective means of communicating with its members, whether it's an email distribution list, an eBranch or a newsletter.

If your facilities agreement includes the use of workplace noticeboards, make sure you display a range of Prospect material and that you change it regularly.

Finally, don't forget that communication is a two-way process. Your members need to know who the branch officers and reps are and how to contact them.

## Prospect's eBranch system

An eBranch is an area of our website which branches maintain themselves, publishing updates, uploading documents, hosting a discussion forum and creating their own web pages. Most of this content is restricted to members of the branch, although the system also provides up to ten public web pages that can be used for recruitment or campaign purposes.

A mass email facility enables branches to email all their members or reps using the addresses held on our membership database. Branch/section officers can get online access to lists of their members, leavers and joiners.

For more information about the eBranch system, see <https://members.prospect.org.uk/ebranches> or contact [web@prospect.org.uk](mailto:web@prospect.org.uk)

## Employer's email system and internal mail

Your branch secretary can give you guidance, but your employer will usually authorise representatives to use certain facilities, which may include email and internal mail. If you are sending an email to branch members please use a bc



(blind copy) as some will not want their membership known to others.

## Top tips for communicating with members

Local publicity is a great way to engage, inform and influence. Whether it's posters, emails or newsletters, communicating with members will help you build membership and strengthen your branch. Always think about:

- **Who** – is your audience?
- **What** – what's your message?
- **Where** – do you want this read?  
Where can they get more info?
- **When** – is it time specific?
- **Why** – is the union involved?
- **How** – will your audience receive your communication? Hard copy or email?

Below are a few dos and don'ts to think about when producing local communications.

### Do:

- get the headlines right – people often don't read beyond them
- make it personal – use real examples where possible
- keep it simple – less is more
- avoid jargon and over-formal language
- use occasional photos/graphics – too much text is boring
- ensure that you have permission for photos and that content is factual
- invite others to contribute
- keep to standard layout – it creates brand recognition
- choose a readable font and use colour to create contrast.

### Don't:

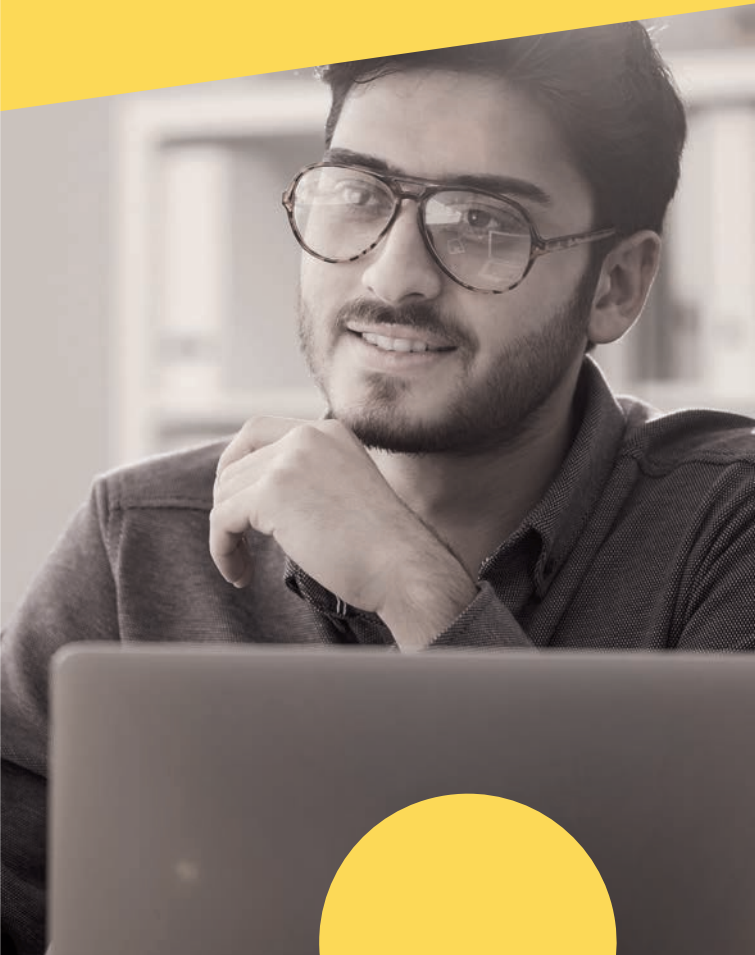
- try to squeeze too much in – it won't get read
- use too many fonts – use no more than two or three per newsletter
- be too clever – boxes, rotated text etc work as the exception, not the rule
- be afraid to ask for help – it's what we're here for.

### Remember to:

- include your local contact details
- plug the websites – [prospect.org.uk](http://prospect.org.uk) and [bectu.org.uk](http://bectu.org.uk)
- include joining instructions on publicity – direct them to the website, or put an application form on the back
- ask someone to check it before you distribute; you may miss obvious errors!

# 8

## Dealing with members' queries



If a member comes to you for information or advice, it's important that you know what services and support are available.

### Members' benefits and services

The 'member benefits' area of our website sets out the services and benefits available to Prospect members. It includes details of our legal services, benevolent fund, death benefit scheme and various deals and discounts.

### Legal services

Our legal services include:

- assistance with grievances and disciplinary issues at work
- advice on employment rights and representation in tribunals
- advice on personal injury law
- a 24-hour legal helpline on non-work matters.

We publish a legal advice guide which summarises the services we provide. You should familiarise yourself with this leaflet <https://bit.ly/prospect-legal-advice>

Workplace and other legal assistance is offered at the union's discretion and is decided on the facts and merits of each case.

We therefore reserve the right not to provide assistance in relation to pre-existing issues. If a non-member asks you for help and you're not sure how to respond, speak to your branch secretary or your full-time officer.

### Work-related problems

Key resources for basic work-related queries include your staff handbook, our series of members' guides covering issues from bullying and harassment to parental leave and our subject-specific factcards. Our Legal Rights factcard is one of the key documents you should keep to hand – see <https://guides.prospect.org.uk/factcard>.

### Personal cases

If you have to take up a member's query as a personal case, make sure you've read our representative's guide to handling personal cases and attended one of our courses – you can find full details on our websites <https://members.prospect.org.uk/courses/> and <https://bectu.org.uk/get-involved/training-for-reps/>

You can download a four-page personal case pro-forma from our website which prompts you to ask all the relevant questions and record the answers when a member

approaches you for help: <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2008/00478>

In most branches, grievances and internal disciplinary cases are handled by reps. More complex cases should be referred to the full-time officer; this includes all cases where an employment tribunal application is submitted.

If you reach the point where you are no longer able to handle a case yourself, speak to your branch secretary or full-time officer as soon as possible.

## Keep it local

If you are confronted with a question, issue or problem that is either outside your experience or particularly complex, in the first instance you should try speaking to another rep in your branch or section. It is highly likely that the answer will be available from someone like your branch secretary, or another rep on your branch committee. There are significant advantages in keeping it local:

- the issue may have arisen before and a useful precedent may have been set
- the answer may require detailed knowledge about that employer's terms and conditions and procedures
- you are more likely to sort out the member's problem quickly.

## Complex problems

Some problems will either be so serious, unusual or complex that the advice of your full-time officer or an HQ department is required.

For issues concerning representation, including legal advice, in all but the most urgent cases it is best if you deal with HQ through your branch secretary or another leading branch representative. In some branches, the FTO may be your branch secretary anyway.

## Member Contact Centre

Queries from members can be referred to our contact centre: **0300 600 1878** or [helpdesk@prospect.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@prospect.org.uk)

## Personal injury cases

If a member is injured or becomes ill because of the negligence of a third party, Prospect can pursue a claim on their behalf through our personal injury scheme. The scheme also covers people in the member's immediate family for non-work related incidents.

Members in England, Scotland and Wales should phone **0800 587 1278**. In other areas please contact Prospect on **020 7902 6624**.

If you are asked to represent a member in a dispute with another member, Prospect has a 'conflict of interest' policy that allows both members to be represented separately. Speak to your branch secretary in the first instance.

## Checklist

- Do you keep an action list or other record of matters you are currently dealing with?
- Are you happy with your own record system? Do you keep it up-to-date? Do you regularly shred old material you no longer need?
- Keep any notes of interviews with members, non-members and management secure.
- Make sure that any notes of phone calls or meetings are secure.



# Meetings

Meetings are a medium for debate, decision-making and distributing information.

Effective meetings are an essential way of progressing the union's work: issues are raised, options considered and actions agreed.

There are, of course, many other types of meeting that you may be involved in – from one-to-one meetings with a member seeking your help, to large set-piece negotiations with management.

This chapter outlines the main factors in running effective union meetings.

## Members' meetings

Attendance should normally be limited to members, but they can sometimes be an opportunity to recruit non-members. For example, if the meeting is about a controversial management proposal, you might want to invite non-members along, so they can see what action Prospect is taking. Make sure you've got a supply of application forms and try to sign people up there and then.

## Committee meetings

The secretary should draw up an annual programme of branch or section committee meetings so that committee members are aware of their commitments for the year. Try to set the time of the meeting so that it is convenient for everyone, and choose a meeting place and time which will minimise the costs, such as travelling expenses.

## Ensuring your meetings are inclusive

If you ever take the chair at meetings, you have probably come across people who seem afraid to join in the discussion, and other people who seem unable to keep quiet! Think about how you have dealt with these situations. Ask yourself, "How could I handle them better – so the quiet ones feel they can make a contribution, and the noisy ones back off a little?"

## Annual meetings

Arrangements for annual general meetings or annual delegate conferences should be made well in advance of the date to allow time for accounts, reports, motions etc to be prepared and for members to take part in any postal ballots.



## Model agenda

The next meeting of the [title] committee will be held at [time] on [date] at [venue].

### Agenda

1. Minutes of the meeting held on [date]
2. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda
3. Recruitment and retention (branch organiser's report)
4. Secretary's report including correspondence
5. Treasurer's report
6. Reports from representatives (eg health and safety rep, equality rep)
7. Other items (eg issues which the secretary has been asked to include on the agenda)
8. Any other business
9. Date of next meeting.

## Agenda and papers

The secretary is responsible for preparing and circulating the agenda for members' meetings and committee meetings. The secretary should consult the president and other officers on the items to be included, and add any items requested by individual members of the committee.

Send out the agenda and relevant papers so that committee members receive them at least seven days before the meeting.

Every branch committee agenda should include the items shown on the model agenda (left). However, all important subjects, whether they arise from the minutes or not, should be given their own place on the agenda.

For annual meetings, the agenda is usually drawn up by a standing orders committee (see page 30).

## Minutes

Writing the minutes of a meeting is an important job. As a permanent record of the business transacted, the minutes will be referred to whenever a query arises in connection with a decision (eg over policy). So it is essential that the minutes are:

- complete but concise; not a record of members' speeches
- balanced and unbiased
- a correct summary of the business transacted and a careful statement of all the decisions taken, with details of voting where appropriate
- prepared and circulated promptly while the matters are fresh in members' minds
- numbered and cross-referenced intelligently.

They should also indicate specific responsibilities for follow-up action.

The minutes of any meeting should include a list of those present and apologies for absence. Their accuracy should always be confirmed at the next meeting.

Be discrete – don't include details of personal cases in minutes of meetings – especially the names of members involved.

If your branch or section has its own eBranch, newsletter, website or intranet site, copies of minutes should be sent to the rep responsible for these media, drawing attention to newsworthy items.

## Claiming expenses

If your branch or section has organised the meeting it will usually pay any expenses you have incurred in attending. Your branch or section treasurer will have the necessary forms (or you can download them from the Resources area of our website) and will reimburse you. All receipts must be provided

If the meeting was organised by Prospect headquarters, your expenses will be paid by the union centrally. The appropriate claim form should be provided at the meeting.

Prospect reimburses 'out of pocket' expenses. It does not pay daily allowances.

## Checklist for organising a meeting

- Try to hold meetings at a time and place which would best suit the members – many people find it difficult to attend meetings outside working time, for example because of childcare commitments.
- Book a room\*, making sure you take account of any accessibility needs for members with disabilities (see the equalities area of our website for Prospect's access policy).
- Provide transport and passes for outside visitors where necessary.
- Publicise the date, time and venue of the meeting (posters on noticeboards, email notification to all members etc), with details of what is going to be discussed. Sometimes this will involve circulating a formal agenda, but if the meeting is to discuss a single workplace issue an agenda is not necessary.

*\* Meeting room facilities at Prospect headquarters and a number of other regional offices are available free of charge to branches.*

# 10

## How Prospect works



## Prospect's objectives

Prospect is an independent trade union and is not affiliated to any political party. Its objectives are set out in its rules. It exists to:

- protect and promote members' interests
- maintain and improve their conditions of employment and relations between them and their employer
- provide and maintain services for the benefit of members.

The union also aims to:

- improve the efficiency and well-being of all employing bodies where there is membership
- promote policies on science, technology and professional knowledge
- recruit all eligible staff to ensure that the union is strong and representative.

Prospect promotes equal opportunities for all members within the union itself and within their employment, irrespective of race, ethnic origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or religion.

Prospect also aims to co-operate, support (financially or otherwise), or participate in the work of other bodies whose objects or activities seem likely to advance, directly or indirectly, the members' interests.

## Union structure

Prospect's structure is set out in the chart on page 15. It is based on three principles:

- control of the union resides with the members, with the shortest possible route between members and decision-making bodies
- union organisation should match that of the employer to facilitate effective representation and recognition
- members' industrial, professional and specialist interests should be catered for.

## Members

Members are the most important part of the union. There are three types, with different degrees of participation in the union's structures:

- working members – full members of the union, with full voting rights
- retired members
- unemployed members.

## Branches

The key unit of organisation is the branch, which forms the basis of representation to other advisory or policy-making bodies in the union structure.

There are more than 600 branches in Prospect. Most of them are employer-based and match the employer's organisational structure as far as possible.

There are also a number of regional branches. These contain small groups of members from various employers which are too small to form their own branches, or individual members who work for employers where Prospect is not recognised.

Branches are very different in their occupational, functional and geographical spread. In some cases, all the members are located in a single building; in others their members are scattered throughout the UK and even around the world.

Branches that cover a number of different occupations and/or locations usually have sections and sub-sections based on employer sub-units, establishments, geographical locations or occupation.

The day-to-day work of the branch is overseen by a branch committee (variously called branch council/executive council/executive committee etc). The committee will be established in accordance with the branch's own rules (model rules for branches are available by emailing [organisation@prospect.org.uk](mailto:organisation@prospect.org.uk) or from the Resources area of our website). Its members will be reps drawn from sections or directly elected by the members.

As well as deciding the union's position on issues that are subject to consultation with the employer, the branch committee has to ensure that its routine business is conducted efficiently.

An effective branch committee should base its work on an annual calendar and:

- issue an annual report and an audited statement of annual accounts
- elect representatives to relevant bodies
- hold an annual delegate conference (ADC) or annual general meeting (AGM)
- elect officers (if not done by the ADC or AGM)
- issue a report on action taken after the ADC or AGM
- inform and consult members
- ensure branch officers and other reps are trained
- oversee section and sub-section accounts

- participate in national conference and any relevant sector conference.

## National executive committee

The national executive committee (NEC) conducts the business of the union in accordance with the policies laid down by national conference. It manages the union's affairs between conferences and normally meets five times a year. The powers of the NEC are laid out in Prospect's rules.

The NEC consists of 28 working members, including three office-holders – the president, vice-president and deputy vice-president (the 'presidential team'), plus the general secretary. The general secretary has no voting rights. Senior Prospect staff may attend NEC meetings in an advisory capacity, but they have no voting rights.

The NEC is elected by working members every two years, from a list of candidates nominated by branches. It serves from the conclusion of one national conference until the conclusion of the next.

NEC members do not represent particular branches or professions. They are elected to look after the interests of the whole membership.

The president, vice-president and deputy vice-president are elected every two years from among the voting members of the NEC.

The NEC establishes the sub-committees it needs for the despatch of its business. Each of them may set up panels or working parties reporting to them on particular aspects of their work. Some of these committees invite direct participation by branch reps.

## Sector executive committees

Branches in a particular industry or industries may also be allocated to a sector. Each sector has an executive committee which is elected every two years at their sector conference from among the members of the sector.

Sectors have delegated authority for matters affecting them, but cannot implement any policy that would conflict with any Prospect national policy.

There are currently three sectors: energy; public service (members in the civil service and related bodies); and media and entertainment. Each sector holds its own conference.



## Bectu divisions

Bectu represents more than 40,000 staff, contract and freelance workers in the media and entertainment industries. The union is organised by into six divisions: Arts and entertainment; BBC; Independent Broadcasting; BT and Digital; London Production and Regional Production.

## Networks

Another, less formal, set of official machineries are Prospect's networks. These were set up to bring together reps and members with particular interests to campaign and share information. Current networks cover young workers as well as a range of diversity issues.

## Retired members' group

The RMG is a national group with active, geographically organised area committees (currently 22). It covers all retired members and sends two observers to the NEC and 12 delegates to national conference.

## National conference

Prospect's biennial national conference formulates policy, approves the annual report and statement of accounts, considers rule changes and elects the standing orders committee (SOC). It is usually held in May or June and lasts for two-and-a-half days.

All branches with more than 20 members are entitled to submit motions to conference, send delegates and make nominations for the SOC and Trades Union Congress delegates. The basis of conference representation is laid down in Prospect's rules.

## Standing orders committee (SOC)

Conference broadly follows familiar rules of debate, and the SOC prepares and organises all aspects of conference business.

An SOC of three members, none of whom may be members of the NEC, is elected for national conference. Each SOC member holds office for three conferences, one vacancy being filled by election at each conference.

## Conference motions

It is conference's responsibility to agree general union policy for the next two years. It is the NEC's duty to implement that policy. So motions for national conference should be those on which a policy decision is desirable from the membership as a whole.

There is no limit on the number of motions that a branch can submit to national conference, but they should be about important matters of policy.

Branch resolutions which do not raise important policy issues can be submitted directly to the NEC for consideration at any time, as can motions which are limited to a local issue but on which the branch requires help, thus saving time at conference.

Motions dealing with particular sector interests should be submitted to the appropriate sector conference or executive committee for consideration.

## Conference and branch timetable

Prospect's rules specify that the national conference is held on a date between 1 April and 15 June every other year as the NEC decides. The date must be published at least 14 months before the start of the conference. A conference timetable is produced towards the end of the year preceding conference.

Each branch should prepare its own calendar to ensure that members have enough time to participate fully in formulating policy.



## Data protection guidance for reps

### Data Protection Regulations

The legislation that protects personal data are:

- The Data Protection Act 2018 which sets out the data protection framework for the UK.
- The UK General Data Protection Regulations 2021 (UK GDPR)
- Protection of Electronic Communications Act 2003

Data protection legislation lays down rules about the way we keep records of individual members and non-members. It covers branches and reps as well as the union centrally, so it's important to follow some basic guidelines. If in any doubt consult your full-time officer.

Further information can be found at: <https://prospect.org.uk/get-involved/gdpr-advice-for-reps/>

### Your rights under UK GDPR

- Right of access (right to request access to personal information)
- Right of rectification (right to request correction of incomplete or inaccurate personal information)
- Right to data portability – allows individuals to obtain and reuse personal data which has been supplied electronically, for their own purposes across different services
- Right to erasure (the 'right to be forgotten' in limited circumstances).
- Right to object to the processing of personal data.

### Data Protection Terms

- **Controller** – A data controller is the body which determines what data is collected, how and why personal data is used, including how it is stored, kept secure and transferred. Prospect is the controller for all union related personal data.
- **Processor** – A processor is an organisation/individual which processes personal data on behalf of a data controller.
- **Processing** – Is anything that you do with personal data, including keeping branch records, creating lists of members/non-members, communicating with members, personal case documents, transferring data, disposing of documents.
- **Personal data** – is any information relating to a living person (often known as the data subject) which enables them to be identified, directly or indirectly.

Examples include: name, membership number, national insurance number, home address, IP address, or information relating to health, religion, occupation, bank details, photographs.

**Therefore, any information that can be used to identify someone can make it personal data.**

- **Special category data** – This is highly sensitive and extra rules apply in using this type of data, which includes data on trade union membership, race, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical belief, political opinions, health, sex life or sexual orientation.

## The Six Principles of Data Protection

The principles of the UKGDPR set out how personal data should be managed. Personal data should be:

1. Processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently.
2. Only be obtained for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes.
3. Be adequate, relevant, and not excessive for the purpose it will be used for.
4. Be accurate, and where necessary kept up to date.
5. Kept for no longer than is necessary for the purpose it was collected.
6. Processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the data.

## Guidance

### Data Security

- It is essential that all information, including computer records, are only available to those who need access to them to carry out their work.
- If using your own computer for union work ensure your computer is protected by turning on firewalls, installing antivirus software, and setting strong passwords.
- Ensure all mobile equipment can be locked, password protected and remotely wiped if lost.
- Lock screen when away from your desk.
- Paper files needs to be locked away when not in use.

### Collection of Data

- Only collect the information that you need.
- Get consent of the member, in writing, when dealing with a personal case.
- Inform members how you will use their data and if you intend to share their data.

- Encourage members to keep their details up to date on the membership system.

### Emails

- Ensure no one else can access your email.
- If emailing more than one person always use the BCC field if the recipients do not need to see who has been copied into the email, especially when corresponding with branch members.
- Always password protect spreadsheets or any document containing members details. Send the password separately.
- Only use a member's preferred email address.
- Please use Prospects secure free E-branch system, available via Prospect website. <https://members.prospect.org.uk/resources/ebranches>
- Ensure you are sending to the right person especially when using auto insert for email addresses
- We can only use an email address provided by the member themselves.

### Do:

- Respect the privacy rights of members.
- Think of personal data held about individuals as though it was your own.
- Mark all correspondence, electronic or otherwise as private and confidential.
- Be aware that data protection applies to paper files, electronic files, telephone recordings, audiotapes, photographs, and social networking media.
- Be open with people about the information we process about them and why we need to do so.
- Ensure all personal data is disposed of as securely as possible.
- Bear in mind that when writing reports, minutes etc that the member has the right to see information relating to them. This includes deleted emails.
- Bear in mind that opinions can be personal data, and therefore a member's right of access would include this information.

### Don't:

- Reveal personal data to third parties without the data subject's permission.
- Disclose any data over the telephone without permission.
- Put personal data on the internet without the data subject's permission.
- Take personal data home without ensuring that it can be securely stored.



## Retention Policy

Prospect has a retention policy which sets how long personal data can be retained.

The union's policy is to destroy closed case files after:

- Six years – equal pay cases
- Seven years – employment related cases
- Seven years – personal injury cases
- 12 years – industrial disease cases.

## Data Breach

A breach of personal data includes some of the following:

- access by an unauthorised third party.
- deliberate or accidental action (or inaction) by a controller or processor.
- sending personal data to an incorrect recipient.
- failing to blind copy an email.
- sending spreadsheets unencrypted containing union member personal data.
- computing devices containing personal data being lost or stolen.
- alteration of personal data without permission; and
- loss of availability of personal data.

Data breaches must be reported to Prospect soon as possible either to a union official or to the Data Protection Compliance Officer. Depending on the nature of the breach ie how many members involved and the sensitivity of the data we may have to report the incident to the ICO, and we have 72 hours in which to do so.

## Checklist

- When using personal data just ask yourself the following questions:
- Is the information being processed for specified and lawful purposes?
- Is the information adequate, relevant and not excessive?
- Is the information accurate and up to date?
- Do we need to keep the information?
- Is the information secure?

## Prospect Data Protection Compliance Officer

The Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring Prospect complies with data protection legislation. Data breaches and subject access requests can be made on [datacompliance@prospect.org.uk](mailto:datacompliance@prospect.org.uk).

## E-Branch System

This provides a secure and safe way for Branch and Sections to communicate with their members. Branch and Sections can access the service via the Prospect website at: <https://members.prospect.org.uk/resources/ebranches>

The systems provides:

- branch/sector membership lists
- a mass email tool without having separate distribution lists
- a content management system .

## Subject access requests

If a member submits a Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) to Prospect we would have to disclose any communication which identifies them by name or implication. This includes emails, letters, notes and memos that you may have sent or received as a rep.



# Contacting Prospect

As well as more than 4,000 reps, Prospect has around 250 staff who are there to help you deliver services to members. They are based in our London headquarters and offices in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the English regions, the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey.

## Regional offices

Each regional office has one or more teams of negotiating and support staff with responsibility for specific branches and groups of members.

## Member Contact Centre

The Member Contact Centre brings together the membership and advice team to provide a primary contact for all members. The teams are available between 8.30am and 7pm Monday to Friday on 0300 600 1878.

## MCC – Helpdesk

The Helpdesk is the primary contact for members with work-related questions or general enquiries. Experienced advisers will triage the contact and provide advice or ensure the member reaches the right destination.

It provides work-related advice and refers members to local representatives or negotiating teams when required. Regional branch and BT and Digital division members are serviced directly by the Helpdesk.

Members in branches that have existing relationships with Prospect through representatives or full-time officials, can contact the Helpdesk if they are unsure of who to contact locally or have a general query.

Depending on the nature of the query, the Helpdesk will assist members, provide them with their local representative's contact information or pass them on to the relevant team in Prospect. Email [helpdesk@prospect.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@prospect.org.uk)

## MCC – Membership

The membership team is responsible for maintaining accurate records of current and past members. These records control a variety of functions including ballots, subscriptions, the distribution of magazines and emails.

All changes of members' details should be passed to the membership team as soon as possible so we can make sure that our records are as accurate as they can be. Email [membership@prospect.org.uk](mailto:membership@prospect.org.uk)

In many branches, this is done by the membership and recruitment secretary or the branch organiser. However, you should encourage your members to update their own details by logging into the website at [prospect.org.uk](http://prospect.org.uk)

## Web chat

We also offer a web chat service to members and non-members. Please follow the prompt on our website – [www.prospect.org.uk](http://www.prospect.org.uk) – and this will put you in direct contact with one of our membership administrators.

### Don't forget!

In most instances reps should seek the advice and assistance of other reps in their branch – possibly their branch secretary – before contacting a Prospect full-time officer.

---

“...a union is its  
representatives:  
the active members  
who give their  
time to protect  
and advance the  
interests of their  
colleagues”

Mike Clancy, General Secretary



New Prospect House,  
8 Leake Street, London SE1 7NN

T 0300 600 1878

E [enquiries@prospect.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@prospect.org.uk)

21-0033/PDF

[prospect.org.uk](http://prospect.org.uk)