

Regional Young Members' Forum Report

I am currently the Young Members Officer for NW Gas UNISON Branch, and co-Chair of the NWYMF. I was elected as Co-chair along with Susan Workman from Hyndburn Branch at the last AGM in May.

It's our first year as co-chairs of the young members committee and the first time we have been involved with the regional forum. In its present state the Forum provides an exciting and challenging opportunity, with the potential to become a strong democratic and organising part of UNISON. I have taken part in a number of events which include the national Young Members weekend, as well as regional equalities meetings and the TUC regional Young Members Forum. It is at these events that I am able to link in with other young members from across the country and also other young members from across the unions.

Being the co-chair has also made me realise how important it is to encourage more young members to come forward and become more active in the union. I have also seen the struggle of branches that try to recruit more young members or encourage participation, without success. Because of this we are offering our help to Branches who need extra support in engaging with young workers; I will be speaking at a number of AGMs on this issue and we will co-ordinate across the region to try and ensure a new generation of young activists is brought into UNISON.

Please find below a brief list of the work our Forum has done in 2013:

- The forum had a working group meeting in August to finalise next year's annual action plan, we have now agreed this in principle (to formally agree this at our next AGM) and will work from this starting from January and of which we will update throughout the year.
- We have produced our first newsletter, which will be sent to young members by email and uploaded to our webpage. We wanted to ensure that we communicate in as many ways as possible with young members, about the issue faced by young members and also to advertise the forum. We will be monitoring the success of this newsletter, with a view to producing a further two next year.
- In May we sent a delegation to Cuba.
- We sent delegates to the National young members weekend, TUC weekend and TUC young workers forum.
- Encouraged a young member to attend Durham Miners Gala in July.
- Have delegates from the forum sitting on regional council and regional committee.

- We have had new members join the forum throughout the year and also a number of young members that have become active in their workplace. This includes taking part in regional recruitment drives.
- We have this year put together our own regional young members forum budget.
- Regionally we are looking at ways to increase participation of young members, including producing a poster asking young members to come forward to be a part of the Regional Forum and asking young people to join UNISON.

We have devised an action plan for next year, incorporating issues that have been raised by young members including housing, zero hours contracts and training for young members. This will include:

- Working with other SOGs.
- Producing newsletters and increasing our online presence to raise awareness of our work, including creating videos.
- Organising training and other events.
- Working with branches to help them engage with young workers and raise awareness of the Forum
- Get involved with recruitment events across the region, including student nurse recruitment.
- Giving talks in schools, colleges and universities to raise awareness of the Trade Union movement amongst young people and recruit new members where possible.
- Co-ordinating with the TUC regionally to raise awareness of the Trade Union movement as a whole.

This is just a brief overview of the work we will be doing, please feel free to get in touch with myself or Susan if you have any questions.

Thanks for your time,

Max Darby
Co-Chair, NW Young Members Forum