
BFAWU Young Members Network July 2024

Young member engagement

We discussed the difficulty engaging young members in branches who may not be aware of the various roles and opportunities in the union, who may not have the chance to stand to become reps, or attend conference, how do we reach young members that don't receive circulars or know about the website yet. Regular targeted Mailchimp emails were suggested, that cover things like young member events open to our members, training opportunities and updates relevant to young members. The Mailchimp system allows for emails to be sent to 35 and under, which is out of the scope of the rule book age category but is still better than not reaching out at all.

A discussion on annual conference was had and the lack of young members in attendance, why aren't branches utilising the ability to take a young member with them as an additional delegate, this would help with succession planning in the branch, as well as the young member gaining experience and learning of conference and from the fringe meetings. Could limited numbers of paid release be the barrier? If so, how do we get experienced reps to step aside or share paid release to allow new people to come through...

Age bracket of young members

There was a debate whether the young member ceiling age of 27 still reflects the industry, people are leaving full time education later due to the compulsory age being lifted to 18 yet our rules haven't reflected that change, what happens when a young member 'ages out' how do we keep them involved, can they still be engaged in informal networks like this despite not being allowed to attend conference as a young member, it was discussed whether it may be worth a motion to conference to change the age limited to 30 for example, but that the TUC age is 27 and that would need to be taken into consideration when electing people to their young members conference, the GFTU young members event allows people up to 35.

Young Cooperators are 30 and under with the European umbrella being 35 and under.

Support for young members in branches and workplaces without branches

An honest conversation was had around how lonely it can be being a young activist in a branch if you are the only one, and even harder if there isn't a recognised branch in the workplace and they are the only member. How it can be frustrating at times when young members want to be more active and involved in their branch and the union but aren't given the opportunity to do so, aren't given the chance to become reps, aren't passed on information about events, demos or other things they could get involved in because there are gatekeepers in the branch not passing on the information. Which means they can't progress and therefore switch off, disengage and become active elsewhere in the wider movement rather than in our union.

Resources for young members

Not all young people know their rights, or that they can challenge things that aren't right in the workplace, intersectionality also adds pressure too, could we do some printable resources that can be taken off the website easily, and referred to via member mail outs?

Housing issues

Housing is a huge issue for young members, issues getting housing, issues with landlords and rights of tenants, no fault evictions.

Young people are increasingly sharing houses, which does make things more affordable, but can create other issues if someone is unable (or unwilling) to pay their share as it impacts everyone. How can we do more about this, could we work with Acorn and other renters' unions to develop a campaign, or information about rights, could we look at promoting housing coops? Put information in the Foodworker about No fault eviction rights etc.

Newsletter/Annual report

An idea to develop a biannual (twice a year) young members newsletter was touched on, that could be aligned with conference and the end/beginning of the year, it could cover some key issues for young members, information about what our young members are doing and either be or complement a young members annual report to conference to ensure young members can visibly see what young members in the BFAWU are doing and achieving.



Young members at conference

There was a discussion about holding a young members event at conference, building up the network of young members that do attend, having a focus on them to support their development etc. there is plenty of time to plan this though!

AOB

It would be good to have a young members YouTube channel, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter too, we have some of them already but unsure who has access to them, so may need to check and if needs be re-start again if we can't access them.

There is a young members WhatsApp group that we are encouraging young members to join to keep updated and develop ideas further between meetings.

Young members can join the group using this link - <https://chat.whatsapp.com/EYdQFJQWxyyLfQ8oCWPsec>