

TUC

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The 2019 TUC Summer Patrol for Young Workers

Developing a Norway style summer
patrol programme in Yorkshire - Part of
the TUC young workers campaign



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A Trade Union Summer Patrol in Yorkshire

Proposal

In July 2018, the Norwegian LO in Møre and Romsdal region invited TUC Yorkshire & the Humber and activists from the GMB and BFAWU unions to observe and participate in their annual summer patrol exercise targeting young workers.

This patrol operated on the basis of a business door-knock, where activists travelled from town to town, visiting businesses unannounced to speak to young workers about their conditions and rights at work.

Four young trade union delegates from Yorkshire took part, and observed an incredibly successful and inspiring project which:

- Raised the profile of trade unions with young people
- Acted as a watchdog to scrutinise application of working rights by businesses
- Gave unions a data collection and press opportunity to draw attention to ZHCs, low pay, safety concerns, insecure work
- Fostered an important cross-union sense of solidarity and an important socialising opportunity for young trade unionists to build networks, which encouraged a high level of participation

Due to these factors, the patrol experience is a hugely positive first or early encounter with trade unionism both for young workers being interviewed, and for the activists participating in the patrol.

Our proposal is to test pilot this patrol model in Yorkshire, as a trade union best practice for engaging with young workers and encouraging a higher level of trade union activism from existing young trade unionists.

With 2019 voted the Year of Young Workers at the TUC's 150th Congress in Manchester, next year would be an appropriate opportunity to develop best practices from sister unions, and experiment with this model.

A Brief overview of the Norway Summer Patrol model

Since 1985, the LO has operated a Sommerpatrulje or 'Summer Patrol'. The patrol is described as an "annual profile and recruitment campaign" which aims to safeguard the rights of young workers whilst promoting youth involvement within trade unions. The Summer Patrol involves training 600 trade union young activists who then, unannounced, visit workplaces (over 7000 business visits) that employ young workers to ensure that laws

are being adhered to, and that rights are being practiced where necessary. The Patrol has helped to slash breaches of workplace laws in half, from 50% to 25% (Jelle, 2016).

How does it work?

The LO sets out a plan of workplace engagement in each region, giving each participant a list of workplaces to visit. Once at a workplace the LO speak with the manager to agree they can conduct an interview with their young workers.¹ The interview is set out using the following form to help the union ascertain the conditions of the workplace, inform the individual what the union is and does and hopefully recruit the individual or at least make them aware of the union's existence.

How does the LO encourage young members to participate?

This can be explained in several parts:

- Young members want to promote and grow the movement they're a part of and consequently voluntarily get active in the campaign.
- The campaign is designed, organised and run by young members in conjunction with fulltime Youth Officers.
- They provide training programmes both before and during the Summer Patrol. Prior to the Summer Patrol the Young members section of the LO organise a national youth conference called "FYKO". At FYKO the LO works to provide an introduction to trade unionism. This introduction has four levels of training:
 - (i) Intro to Trade Unionism. This includes a basic understanding of trade union structures, processes and functions. It also covers skills training such as the basics for membership organisation.
 - (ii) Speaking Skills. Members are provided with social media and conventional media training. The training also seeks to develop communication skills and build public speaking confidence.
 - (iii) Political Education 101. Members are educated on the tripartite system, government structure and political parties
 - (iv). Political Education. In effect an advanced course in understanding the structures of the LO expanding on level 1.
- Participants take unpaid leave from work and the LO covers their wages during their unpaid leave along with travel and sustenance costs while on the Summer Patrol.

¹ The LO does not have a legal right to interview workers if management refuse entry.

Key principles to take away from the Norway Summer Patrol

The patrol works effectively because:

- It provides a positive first experience of trade unions to new/young workers as it is an open and honest conversation about their conditions and rights at work, rather than a hard sell of membership
- It is focused on young workers at a relevant moment in their lives
- The concentrated focus in a small period of time creates a 'moment' in public and press awareness
- It has union buy in to support its activities, as well as business buy in
- It presents a significant data collection opportunity to use in campaigning and press work, and this makes businesses more likely to permit access
- The social and collective experience encourages ongoing commitment and involvement from hundreds of young trade unionists, who return to participate in this and other trade union activities year after year.

How can the Summer Patrol work in Yorkshire?

We would look to develop a summer patrol model in Yorkshire through limited piloting in key towns and cities, following union buy in and depending on the existing young members committees of affiliates.

We will also use existing resources to develop this project, and utilise key dates in the trade union calendar, such as Young Workers Month, and Heart Unions week.

Model for 2019

We will plan to recruit volunteers ahead of the Regional AGM in April 2019, and invite them to a training day that will replace the Young Workers Fringe.

At this training day, we will set a date for a week long patrol to take place in South Yorkshire, targeting Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley. We will plan a series of high street, factory, hospitality and other visits, at different times of the working day and night, to sample a broad range of workers and workplaces. We'll seek advice from unions on workplaces to visit.

We'll plan to stay in central hotel accommodation in each of the towns we visit, with a possible debrief on the final day at Wortley Hall.

Key issues to address

Access to workplaces

Like the UK, Norwegian unions have no right of access to workplaces. However, using the model of the Norwegian LO, we would brand the patrol as a TUC project, including t-shirts and merchandise. Using TUC branding rather than individual union branding could remove potential concerns employers may have about granting us access, and present the patrol in a softer light, focused on interviewing and data collection, rather than recruitment.

Funding

We hope to be able to fund the majority of this project for 2019 through the TUC. We are putting in application to the TUC annual development fund, to cover the cost of accommodation, merchandise, leaflets, food expenses and some travel. We would look to individual union regions and branches to support travel costs of their young members participating.

In the event we do not receive the development funding, we have the option to slim down the costs by eliminating the overnight stays. However, this would remove a key part of the patrol experience, building solidarity and networks for young trade unionists over an intensive week long period.

We could also look to union branches to support delegates on a slimmed down itinerary of 2-3 nights.

The recruitment issue

A key problem we face is what to do about any interviewees who we recruit. Every interview will end with the questions about joining the union – but as a cross union movement, how do we decide which union to sign them up to?

We are exploring the possibility of collecting the interviewee's data to be passed on – and would like to have a discussion with unions about the possibility of allocating interviewee data for individual unions to follow up.

Safety at night

Safety at night is a key issue where we seek to do hospitality interviews, and we will seek advice from Congress House, affiliates, police and other organisations for best practices.

GDPR

Our Congress House specialists are able to provide a tailored policy for this project.

Timeline & objectives for 2018/2019

Young Workers Month pilot days in November/December 2018

Two weekend days in Sheffield at the end of Young Workers month, to test how business responds to the unannounced interviews and whether they grant access

Heart Unions week 2019

Three weekend days or evenings during heart unions week, targeting workplaces proposed by affiliates, to hone the interview form/technique, and test our recruitment model in greenfield sites. This will also act as an initial training for young activists who will help us lead the patrol.

Regional AGM & Young Workers Fringe 2019

A training day for 15-20 young activists, led by the patrol leaders, with trainings from specialists in interviews, union recruitment, social media etc.

Test patrol June/July 2019

A five day programme of visits in (tbc) Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley, which will test the data collection, press release, and interview system. And hopefully result in some recruits!

Measuring success

Minimum success levels for running the patrol again would be:

The interview and patrol engagement

If we gain access to 40% or more businesses, and manage to conduct interviews with 40% of young workers approached.

Data collection and press

If we gain coverage in at least one local paper or radio station per town/city we visit.

Young activist engagement

If we see return sign ups of 40% or more to our next activity after the patrol.

Recruitment

If we agree a system to sign up some workers from the patrol interviews, and that sign up is followed up by the relevant union.

What we need from unions

In order for this to be a success, we need union buy in to the principle of the patrol, as a good model for developing a movement for young workers. We will need some yet to be determined financial contribution from participating union regions and branches.

We would also hope to have a conversation with union regional secretaries about if the recruitment model is viable – and how we can make it work.

Getting involved

In order to get involved in this project please contact:

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