



# REGISTER YOUR WORKPLACE

A 'How To' on engaging, educating and  
registering young people  
in your workplace.





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# Foreword

Our democracy is under real threat. We are stuck in a cycle where politicians are creating policies for those who are participating - those that vote, and those that are registered to vote. This means that our younger, less informed citizens are all too often being ignored. Bite The Ballot and TUC are working in partnership to change this. If we can nurture a generation who understand that the issues they care about can be influenced - if you participate - then we will create a more fair and representative democracy. The key here is issues. We don't believe it when we're told time and time again that young people are 'just apathetic.' This is simply not true. How can you be apathetic about something that has never really been explained to you? Everyone cares deeply about one issue or another, and usually, this issue can be related back to, and is influenced in some way by politics. But if we never take the time to explain these links in a relatable and digestible way, how are we surprised when people say 'politics doesn't affect me.'

By registering to vote, young members of our society are creating a demand. And as business shows us, if demand is not met then competitors will take over the market. It's when we see similar numbers of young people registering in comparison to other demographics that things are set to get really exciting, truly representative. Ultimately, political parties have to learn to communicate their ideologies and values to all age groups. But young people also need to prove that they are votes worth winning - that they have, and will use, the power to punish or reward politicians at the ballot box.

As union reps, you have the power to spread this message amongst the young workers in your workplace. This handbook will help you with some ideas for how to do that, as well as giving you the tools, facts, and stats to use when trying to convince people that they matter, and if they can stand up, and be counted, real change is be on the horizon.



Mike Sani  
Bite the Ballot  
Managing Director

Next year's general election is shaping up to be the most important in a generation. The outcome will determine what kind of country we live in for decades to come. If we are to build a fairer, more equal Britain then it's vital that as many people as possible exercise their democratic right and vote next May. And nowhere is that need greater than when it comes to our young people.

Back in 2010, barely more than four in ten people in the 18 to 24 year-old age group voted. It's incumbent on all of us – trade unionists, campaigners and activists – to do everything we can to boost turnout. Why? Because no vote means no voice. If large numbers of young people don't participate in our democracy, then political parties will simply pay lip service to their concerns and aspirations. That's why we urgently need to encourage the younger generation to register to vote.

Although they did least to cause the financial crash and subsequent recession, young people have borne some of its worst consequences. Youth unemployment remains scandalously high. Many young workers are trapped in low-paid, casual work far below their skill level. And austerity has exacted a heavy toll, with EMA scrapped, university top-up fees introduced and benefits cut.

Young people desperately need change. They need good jobs, not unpaid internships. They need real access to higher education, not an invitation to rack up huge debt. They need high-quality apprenticeships, not workfare. But this will only happen if young people have a proper voice in our political system. And that will only happen if more of them vote.

Whether it's environmental activism, the anti-cuts movement or the new wave of feminism, we know that huge numbers of young people are politically engaged. Our challenge is to translate this into greater participation in national, local and European elections. The TUC is delighted to be working with Bite the Ballot not just to encourage greater democratic engagement, but to make our democracy itself more representative. Trade unions have a crucial role to play in the workplace and beyond. Reps like you are in a unique position to reach out to young workers, highlighting why voting matters. This new guide represents a really useful, practical tool for our activists. So use it, consult it and be inspired by it.

Let's deliver the democratic revolution our young people are crying out for.



*Frances O'Grady*

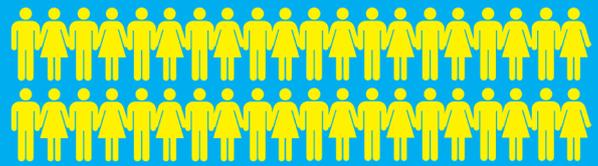
Frances O'Grady  
TUC  
General Secretary

# Step 1: MAKE IT RELEVANT

It's easy to think that politics doesn't affect us, to see the government as some far off irrelevant entity that doesn't really impact our lives. However this is simply not true. Decision-makers at local, national, and international levels are making decisions every day that affect our lives, and if we're not registered and voting, we're letting others speak for us.

Below are some examples of issues that may affect the day to day lives of young workers in your workplace. You can use some of these examples to demonstrate that everyone's life is affected by politics. Young people can influence these issues by taking part.

**37%** of people on zero hour contracts are aged **16-24** – these workers have no guaranteed hours or income - employers use these contracts to cut wages and avoid holiday pay.



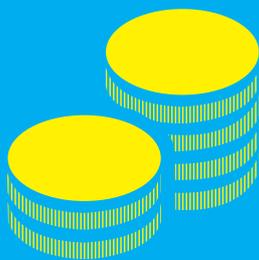
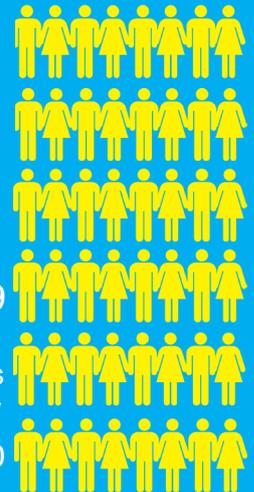
**“Young people work longer for less”**

Although it may be a long way off, with Government proposals set to increase the pension age from 60 to 68, it's going to be even longer before you get your pension.

**OVER 900,000**

**YOUNG PEOPLE ARE UNEMPLOYED**

Following the 2008/9 recession, the sharpest rise in unemployment was experienced by non-graduates under 30



**NMW**

(national minimum wage)  
FOR 21+ YEAR OLDS IS  
£1.37 more than 18 to 20  
£2.71 more than 16-17

Since 2004

**NMW**

(National Minimum Wage)  
for 21+ has increased by £1.45,  
for 16-17 year olds it has increased by 79p.



**87%**

of people with a mortgage are registered to vote compared to only

**56%**

of those in private rented accommodation

# Step 2: MAKE IT REAL

Registering to vote is the first step in having your voice heard, and your opinions counted. Politicians have a lot of people from all sections of society to please, and when they're deciding which policies to implement, or to include in their manifestos, they look at who's registered to vote as an indication of who might vote them into power. Here's the main reasons why voter registration is so important:

## Why let people who don't know you decide without you. Do they really know best?

It's your money, your NHS, your police, your pavement and bins. Decision makers can easily ignore anyone who isn't registered meaning you just have to take what comes your way. #TakePower and register

## Waiting just means one thing- decision makers will continue to ignore young people.

Register as soon as you become 16, become a vote worth winning and use your voice to influence decisions. Do you feel prepared for your future? Car tax going up? Night's out too expensive? Only you can do something about it. You have views and opinions..

### Step 1- Register to vote



## Money, cash, reddie, bills, wedge... whatever you call it, take control of your personal finances.

Registering to vote supports your personal credit rating - you need one if you want to get a mobile phone contract, buy a car, get a mortgage and pretty much anything related to your personal finances.

## Think you're rebelling by not registering?

You're doing exactly what the system expects of you- never being informed means you're less likely to register. It's down to you to get involved and register to vote.



## Hold up - what will they do with my details?

It can be worrying when people ask you for your details. Don't live in fear - the details you're providing are no different to when you apply for a driving license or passport. Make a stand and actively register - you're not giving up any information that's not already known about you.



# Step 3: KNOW THE FACTS



## Who Can Register To Vote?

Any UK citizen over the age of 16 can register. You don't have to wait until you are 18! The earlier you register, the earlier you become a vote worth winning and so politicians will be more likely to write policies to please you.

## How Can You Register?

The way we register to vote has recently changed. Each person is required to register individually, rather than by household.

If you live in England or Wales, you can register to vote online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

You can even use this handy tool to check if you're registered first! [www.vote.mirror.co.uk](http://www.vote.mirror.co.uk)

If you prefer to do things old school style, you can register by completing and signing a paper application (available from [www.bitetheballot.co.uk/thebasics](http://www.bitetheballot.co.uk/thebasics)) and send it to your Local Authority. You can find the address at [www.aboutmyvote.com](http://www.aboutmyvote.com)

## Voter Registration Deadline – April 2015

This date is the cut-off for UK citizens aged 18 or over to register to vote in the General Election on Thursday 7 May 2015.

## How Can You Vote?



### In person

At the polling station. This is the easiest and most common way to vote. Once you're registered, you'll be posted a polling card before the election which will tell you where your local polling station is. It will be in walking distance from your home.



### By proxy

Getting someone to vote on your behalf. You need to fill in and post an application form to vote by proxy.



### By post

You need to fill out and post off an application form to vote by post.

*Remember: If you can vote, you can stand! (For election)*

# What Can You Vote For?

The table below identifies which elections you can participate in depending on where you're from and where you live. You must register to vote to participate. The earlier you register, the earlier you become a vote worth winning and politicians will be more likely to write policies to win your vote.

Citizens from England, Wales and Scotland can now register online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote). Citizens from Northern Ireland, the European union and Commonwealth can complete a paper application (page 7) and send it to your Local Authority. National Insurance numbers support the registration process so make sure you have yours to hand.

You are a...	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Abroad	The UK
 British  Irish  Commonwealth  European citizen living in...						
<b>General Election</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
<b>Local Election</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>Police and Crime Commissioner</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
<b>Scottish Parliament Elections</b>	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
<b>National Assembly for Wales Elections</b>	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
<b>Northern Ireland Assembly Elections</b>	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
<b>European Parliament Elections</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



## Local

In local elections, you are voting for councillors to form your local council. They are responsible for all things going on in your area, e.g. education, transport and public safety.



## National

In general elections, you're voting for an MP to represent you in Parliament. Normally, the party who wins the most seats forms the government. In Scotland, N.Ireland and Wales there are also elections to form their own national governments.



## European

European Parliament is where MEPs sort out issues such as workers' rights, international trade and the environment.

# Step 4: BE CONVINCING

We know that it's not easy trying to convince someone to take part when they believe it doesn't matter either way. So here's some top lines that you can use to counter typical arguments.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN GOVERNMENT

AVERAGE AGE OF MPS

50

2 PERCENT OF  
MPS ELECTED  
IN 2010 IN  
THEIR 20S

AVERAGE AGE OF  
COUNCILLORS

60

Politics isn't just for the older generation. You don't have to be underrepresented. Participate, Vote.

“

Politicians pay most attention to those who use their vote; if you want to be listened to, go to the ballot box.

Pamela Nash  
MP for Airdrie and Shotts,  
elected aged 25.



“

Every young person has the ability to become a catalyst of change and a pioneer of positive politics

Rabia Bhatti  
Councillor for Newtown Ward,  
Chesham, elected aged 20.

”

## But, They Aren't Interested & They Don't Care?

Because we don't learn about democracy from a young age, there's a lot of myths out there, and you must be ready to counteract these. Firstly, you should emphasise that:

You can't complain if you don't participate! If you are unhappy with something you must participate, be active and speak up to change it!

Typical Arguments could include:

“*One vote does not make a difference.*”

It does! 2 votes won the Winchester seat in the 1997 General Election



“*Politicians do not represent me - I don't want to vote for any of them.*”

Try to look beyond individual MPs. Read up on a party's policies and core values. If you still don't believe in any of them you have the ability be the change you want to see – Stand as an independent!

“*They will not listen to me.*”

Councils listen to people who speak up loud enough! A protest campaign led by young people in Bradford meant the 80% cut in youth services was scaled back by the council.



# Step 5: What Can You Do?

The key to ensuring a turnaround in youth participation and registration levels is ensuring that people understand how and why their vote matters. You can use your position as a union rep to ensure that all young workers in your workplace are aware of why taking part in democracy is so important to their lives. The more creative and imaginative you can be the better, but here's some ideas to give you some inspiration...



## Debate

Organise a discussion forum or debate on why people should vote. But don't limit yourself to voting, debates on issues that affect your work place, especially in the run up to the General Election would be really effective in encouraging people to register.

Topics such as:

**The living wage vs The minimum wage**

**The rising cost of living**

**Zero Contract Hours**

**Gender Equality: Equal Pay and Treatment**

**Fracking vs Solar Power**

**UK Foreign Policy**

Emphasise to participants that without registering to vote, their opinions do not count!

## Organise a Session of The Basics

See page 11

## Email



Email round to colleagues the link to register to vote. But don't forget to use the information in this pack to convince them of why they should.

## Voter Varsity

Organise a competition in your workplace between different groups or departments. Whoever has the highest number of registered employees wins! You could even talk to your employer to see if you, your employer or external contacts are able to provide an incentive or prize for winning.



## Organise A Registration Rally

Use the common areas in your office and dedicate a day or afternoon to registering as many people as possible. Remember to advertise the day in advance and get a big build up. Maybe include a Registration Rally around another event in your office.

If your workplace has a notice board, put up the Poster contained in this pack. Add your name and contact so people can get in touch with you if they want to know more!

## Make It Easy

Set up an information point in a communal area with resources (p. 11) and paper registration forms for people to fill out there and then. You could even think about setting up a 'ballot box' for people to put their completed forms into. You'll then need to collate the forms and send them off to the correct Local Authority, which you can find here: [www.aboutmyvote.com](http://www.aboutmyvote.com)

## Be Active

Ask people if they are registered to vote and whether they are interested in registering to vote. If not, ask them why not! Do not solely focus on young people; disabled individuals, migrants and ethnic minorities are also large under-represented groups.

# Play The Basics



The Basics consist of two games which inspire discussions about voting, demystify the registration process and emphasise the enormous power young people have. The BTB team have carried out these sessions throughout the country, inspiring thousands of young voters. The session will last 45 minutes and the goal is to end the session with participants registering to vote.

For more details on The Basics and to download the session go to:

[bitetheballot.co.uk/thebasics](http://bitetheballot.co.uk/thebasics)

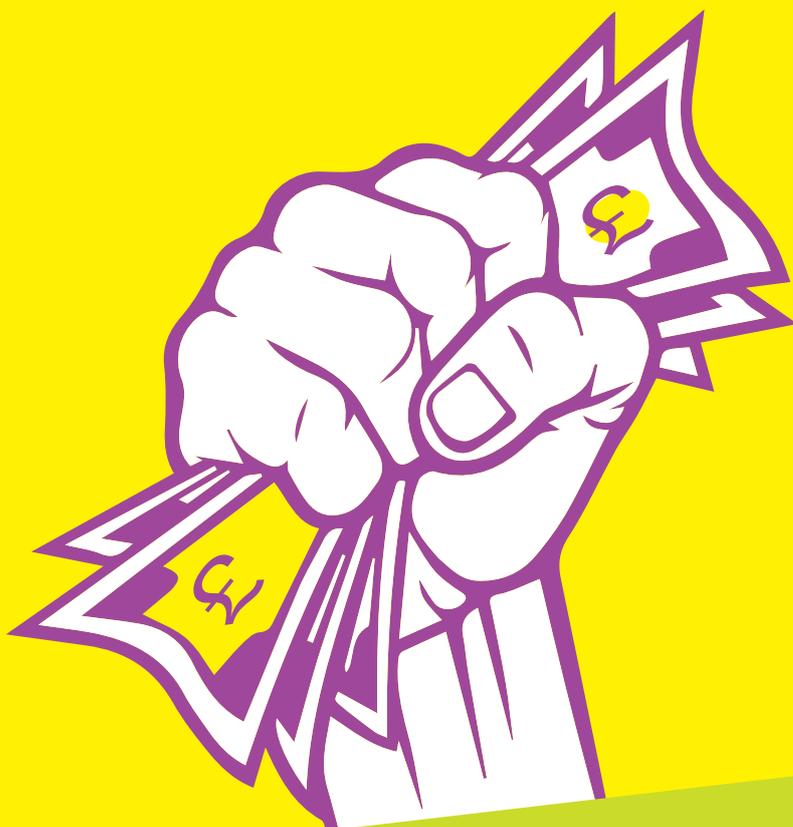


## The Game

BTB have also created an online version of the second game 'Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is', which can be emailed to all colleagues who are unable to attend a session.

To play The Game go to

[games.bitetheballot.co.uk](http://games.bitetheballot.co.uk)



## Other Resources

Posters, Stickers and other Resources can be found at:

[bitetheballot.co.uk/resources](http://bitetheballot.co.uk/resources)

Registration Forms (online and paper forms)

[bitetheballot.co.uk/register](http://bitetheballot.co.uk/register)



[bitetheballot.co.uk](http://bitetheballot.co.uk)



[@BiteTheBallot](https://twitter.com/BiteTheBallot)



[facebook.com/bitetheballot](https://facebook.com/bitetheballot)



[youtube.com/user/BitetheBallot](https://youtube.com/user/BitetheBallot)

# DO POLITICS, OR POLITICS WILL DO YOU



REGISTER TO VOTE AND #TAKE POWER

DON'T LET OTHER PEOPLE SPEAK ON YOUR BEHALF

REGISTER AT 16 TO MAKE YOURSELF VISIBLE BEFORE YOU VOTE

NOT REGISTERING TO VOTE IS NOT REBELLING  
YOU'RE DOING WHAT THE SYSTEM EXPECTS

REGISTERING TO VOTE IMPROVES YOUR  
CREDIT RATING FOR MOBILE PHONES AND LOANS

BY REGISTERING, YOU'RE NOT GIVING AWAY  
ANY INFORMATION THAT'S NOT ALREADY  
KNOWN ABOUT YOU

