# Your right to join a trade union

You have the right to choose whether to join a trade union. This right is protected under UK law.

This statement explains your right to choose whether to join a trade union. It sets out information to help you understand that right and how it may apply in your workplace.

The statement provides general information about trade unions, their role and activities, and rights for trade union membership. Where there are one or more trade unions that are recognised by, or have a statutory access agreement with, your employer, more information is also provided about those trade unions.

This statement is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all rights, responsibilities, or circumstances for trade union membership.

## 1 What is a trade union?

Trade unions are organisations made up wholly or mainly of workers. They represent workers and the interests of their members in discussions and negotiations with employers.

## 2 Trade union activities

Trade unions can be involved in a range of activities, which may vary depending on the circumstances. Some activities relate to trade union membership, while others depend on whether a trade union is recognised by an employer.

### 2.1 Support provided to members

Trade unions provide services to their members. These may include:

- providing advice or representation in disciplinary and grievance procedures
- discussing access to training, skills development and career progression
- raising concerns, providing advice and promoting equality issues at work

### 2.2 Support provided in workplaces with a recognised trade union

A recognised trade union is a trade union that the employer has recognised for the purpose of collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is the process by which a recognised trade union negotiates collective agreements with employers on behalf of workers. Recognition may apply only in relation to certain groups of workers, grades or locations.

When a trade union is recognised by an employer, it may:

- negotiate collective agreements with employers on matters such as pay, hours, holidays and other working conditions

- consult with employers about significant workplace changes, such as large-scale restructuring exercises, including redundancy
- represent workers collectively in discussions about workplace policies and practices
- engage with employers on health and safety matters.

Trade unions may charge a membership fee, which may vary depending on income or circumstances.

## 3 Recognised trade union(s)

*[Use one of these two options to tell workers information about trade unions recognised by the employer or to tell workers that the employer does not recognise any trade union:]*

*[Either (where the employer recognises at least one trade union):]*

Where your employer recognises one or more trade unions, in any part of its organisation, more information is provided below.

*[Insert name of employer]* recognises and works with the following trade union(s) for the purposes of collective bargaining:

*[Insert list of recognised trade union(s).]*

*[For each recognised trade union, specify or summarise which categories of staff and workplaces are covered by each recognition arrangement.]*

*[For each recognised trade union and if provided by the trade union for this purpose, insert at least two of the following contact details, all such details to be general and not individual: (1) email address; (2) telephone number; (3) physical office location or address.]*

*[Or (where no trade union is recognised by the employer):]*

*[Insert name of employer]* does not currently recognise any trade union for the purposes of collective bargaining.

## 4 Statutory access agreements

*[Use one of these two options to tell workers information about statutory access agreements with trade unions or to tell workers that the employer does not have a statutory access agreement with any trade union:]*

*[Either (where the employer has at least one statutory access agreement with a trade union):]*

Statutory access agreements allow trade union officials to enter a workplace, communicate with workers, or both, for specified purposes.

Where your employer has a statutory access agreement with one or more trade unions, in any part of its organisation, more information is provided below.

*[Insert name of employer]* has a statutory access agreement with the following trade union(s):

*[Insert list of trade union(s) that are parties to statutory access agreements.]*

*[For each such trade union and if provided by the trade union for this purpose, insert at least two of the following contact details, all such details to be general and not individual: (1) email address; (2) telephone number; (3) physical office location or address.]*

*[Or (where the employer has no statutory access agreement with a trade union):]*

*[Insert name of employer]* does not currently have a statutory access agreement with any trade union.

## 5 Finding a trade union

If you choose to join a trade union, you have the right to apply to join a trade union of your choice. Some trade unions focus on particular sectors, professions or types of work.

Information about trade unions, including the Certification Officer's list of trade unions, is publicly available from the Certification Officer, the independent statutory regulator of trade unions.

### 5.1 Certification Officer's list of trade unions:

*[Use at least one of the two following options to enable workers to see the Certification Officer's list of trade unions. Where the first option is used, there are two alternatives because the precise text of the statement will be different depending on whether the statement is sent or made available by electronic means or is sent or made available other than by electronic means:]*

*[Either (where the employer provides details of the Certification Officer's webpage containing the list of trade unions):]*

*[Where the statement is sent or made available by electronic means: insert hyperlink to, and the following webpage address of, the Certification Officer's list of trade unions: https://www.gov.uk/certification-officer-list-of-trade-unions.]*

*[Where the statement is sent or made available other than by electronic means: insert the following webpage address of the Certification Officer's list of trade unions: https://www.gov.uk/certification-officer-list-of-trade-unions.]*

*[And / or (where the employer provides the Certification Officer's list of trade unions alongside the statement):]*

The Certification Officer's list of trade unions is provided alongside this statement.

## 6 Trade union membership and your rights

Workers have certain employment rights in relation to trade union membership, some of which are briefly summarised here.

These rights include the right to choose whether to join a trade union and whether to remain a member.

These rights also include that it is unlawful for an employer to dismiss an employee because they are, or are not, a member of a trade union, or because they take part in trade union activities at an appropriate time. An employer must also not subject a worker to a detriment (that is, treat them unfavourably) because of:

- trade union membership or non-membership
- taking part in trade union activities at an appropriate time
- using trade union services at an appropriate time.

More information on joining a trade union and your employment rights with trade union membership is publicly available.