

Q&A on the CWU's political work – why it's important that new members opt-in

Why does the CWU do political work?

Decisions that affect our members at work aren't just taken by the employer, but are also taken by the government. Holiday pay, sick pay, the minimum wage, paternity leave, working hours, pensions, protection from discrimination, unfair dismissal and our ability to represent people at work as a trade union are just some of the issues the government has a say over. So in order to stand up for members in the workplace, we need to have not just an industrial voice but a political voice as well.

What about broader issues?

We stand up for members on other issues that matter to them. We campaign for funding for the NHS; for decent housing and a ban on rip-off rents; for a state pension that guarantees a good standard of living; against cuts to services our members and their families rely on like schools and public transport; for action on the cost-of-living; on inequality and social mobility in society; against discrimination against minority groups; and much more. These campaigns are set by our Conference, the NEC and other committees as part of the union's democracy.

What political work does the CWU do?

- We campaign to put pressure on the government and politicians at a national level and locally to try to influence decisions they take that affect our members.
- We support and train CWU members who have worked in our industries to become politically active and get involved in politics themselves.
- We develop and promote our own ideas about the industries our members work in to promote and protect good jobs.
- And we work with other trade unions and organisations that share our values to build support for our agenda on issues from employment rights to the NHS.

What about the Labour Party?

The CWU is affiliated to the Labour Party which means we get a say in its policy making and can try to make sure it stands up for our members. We also work to get CWU members who work in our industries selected as Labour candidates to ensure it reflects our members' views. The Labour Party is the only political party that gives trade unions like ours a say in what it does and this is an important way that we can exert influence in politics.

Because of this relationship we secured some key pledges in the Labour manifesto at the last election. It pledged to renationalise Royal Mail, invest significantly in broadband, stop Post Office closures and to dramatically enhance employment rights and our members' voice at work.

What does the political levy go towards?

The 20p per week political levy funds a range of work including lobbying the government and politicians, broader public campaigns, research to develop policy ideas, our affiliation to Labour and providing training and other support for CWU members who want to get active in politics. Branches and Regions both get a share of the levy to do political work locally.

Who makes decisions about the CWU's political work?

CWU Conference, our National Executive, the General Secretary and Regional and Branch Committees all make decisions about our political work as part of the union's democracy.