

Maximising participation in ballots and elections

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It is vital that we ensure our ballots and elections have healthy turnouts. Voting is a key index of engagement in an issue. Our managements watch our ballots and scrutinise our turnouts to gauge what their next move should be. A good ballot result can be enough to end a dispute in itself. A bad turnout does little to strengthen negotiators' hands.

The campaigns team has produced a comprehensive guide to getting the vote out in your local industrial action ballot, which you can download here:

http://btu.web.ucu.org/?attachment_id=131

Here is a checklist of things you should automatically be doing during any election, but **especially** during an industrial action ballot.

- Plan a series of emails to members urging them to vote and to use their voices. At least three and maybe more messages from the Chair or President, or from other officers, explaining why the vote is important, and how it will help the union to have a good turnout.
- Publish a one-off newsletter just concentrating on the ballot issue, using the template here - <http://btu.web.ucu.org/toolkit/>

[newslettertemplate/](#) - or contact the campaigns team for help with a basic Vote Yes leaflet.

- Contact all your reps and contacts at department level and ask them to visit all members and to email all members in their departments reminding them to vote.
- Call a mass meeting or in the case of internal elections, maybe a hustings meeting as early as possible during the ballot period, with the election issue as the only item on the agenda.
- One good idea can be to ask members to email you to indicate that they have voted and then tick their names off against a membership list. This means you can concentrate on those areas where members have not voted.

A simple ballot plan

One week before ballot opens

- Make sure you have Vote Yes leaflets and posters
- Distribute leaflets and posters to reps and contacts, along with updated membership lists and advice on contacting people during the ballot period

Day ballot opens

- Email to all members from President/Chair urging them to vote and summarising key issues very briefly

- Ensure that ballot details and leaflets are on your blogsite and key arguments are in your newsletter.

Three days into the ballot period

- Follow up email asking members to reply to say they've voted and advertising general meeting
- Email to reps reminding them to contact members and return names of those who have voted.

Half way through ballot period

- General meeting—speaker on the dispute/issue

Second week of the ballot period

- Final reminder to members to vote and to indicate if they have done so
- Final reminder to reps to send back lists of members who have voted

The Campaigns Team's 'Get the Vote Out' toolkit contains comprehensive and detailed advice and guidance on ballot campaigns, including model letters and suggestions for running effective ballot campaigns and model messages to send to members:

http://btu.web.ucu.org.uk/?attachment_id=131