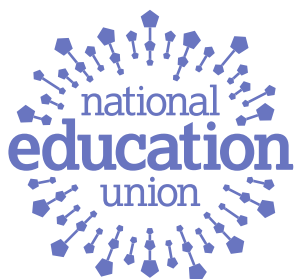


Reps' guide to recruitment



neu.org.uk



**Join
now**

Why recruitment matters

The NEU's strength comes from having a strong, active, and engaged membership in workplaces up and down the country. No union can exist without its members. And no union can take its membership for granted.

Joining a union is not automatic. Many people have never joined a union simply because they've never been asked. They may not even really know what a union is. That's why we need you – a valued NEU rep – to tell them what the NEU is and to ask them to join.

The NEU is not the only union available to education professionals so we cannot afford to assume that people will simply join us when they enter the profession. If you don't ask new starters in your workplace to join at the earliest opportunity, another union might get there first.

While many trainee teachers will join the NEU at university at recruitment events, many will go straight into the workplace through schemes like School Direct, having never been to a recruitment event at a university. The only way those new entrants to the profession will find out about the union is if you introduce yourself and invite them to join.

This toolkit covers everything you need to know to recruit new members – from how to have recruitment conversations, to ordering recruitment materials for your noticeboard.



Who can join the NEU?

When you're thinking about recruiting new members, you might be wondering who you can ask to join or who you should be prioritising. The simple answer is that the NEU is a union for all education professionals so everyone in your workplace is welcome to join.

We represent members in maintained schools, academies and free schools, independent schools, sixth form and further education colleges, education support services, alternative education provision settings, and early years settings. If someone works in a school or college, whether they're a teacher, a lecturer, a middle leader, a head teacher, a teaching assistant or a school librarian, NEU membership is open to them. See p5 for important information about support staff. Supply and agency teachers can also benefit from NEU membership.

New starters

When you're thinking about how to prioritise, it makes sense to focus on new starters in the workplace. You should have access to welcome or induction events for new starters at the beginning of the academic year but there may well be other new starters at other points during the year. See page 6 for more information on your right to access a list of new starters. Keep an eye out for new faces and make sure you introduce yourself and invite them to join.

Trainees and ECTs

Among the new starters in your school, you may well have student teachers on placement, trainee teachers on a school-based training route like School Direct or Teach First, or Early Career Teachers (previously NQTs in England and still referred to as NQTs in Wales). These are high priority groups for the union to recruit.

In the past, the union would recruit new teachers at the university where they were undertaking their teacher training or at a Local Authority event for newly qualified

teachers. Increasingly, trainee teachers are going straight into the workplace on school-based training courses so it's more important than ever that reps recruit new teachers in the workplace.

Never assume that a new teacher has already been recruited at university. Make it a priority to ask if they've joined and explain the benefits of joining to them.

It's important to know that student/trainee teachers can join for free. Early Career Teachers (England) and NQTs (Wales) pay just £1 for membership for the first year after qualifying.

Leaders

The NEU welcomes school leaders in membership so you may want to talk to any new members of SLT about staying with or joining the NEU. You could also talk to colleagues in middle leader positions who may be seeking promotion to a leadership role. Remind them that they can continue their NEU membership as they progress in their career.

An important note on support staff

While teaching assistants, librarians, and other members of support staff are welcome to join the NEU, it is important to understand that the NEU is bound by an agreement with sister unions and the TUC which means we do not actively recruit support staff in maintained schools. In maintained schools, only the local government unions (GMB, Unite and Unison) are recognised to collectively bargain on behalf of support staff. There are no restrictions on actively recruiting support staff in independent schools.

Support staff are welcomed into membership if they choose to join and you can talk about their eligibility to join NEU membership if they approach you but you mustn't actively seek to recruit any support staff.

When and where to recruit

Recruitment is a core activity of the union which should take place all year round. However, we know there are times of year when you are more likely to have opportunities to recruit new members. The start of the academic year is when most NEU recruitment activity takes place. You may have new ECTs (England), NQTs (Wales) or new trainees on school-based courses like School Direct or Teach First starting in your workplace. There may be other new starters too; experienced staff who've moved to your workplace from another.

Get access to new staff

Most schools and colleges will have an induction day or meeting for new starters. Depending on the size of the workplace and the number of new starters, these may just happen once at the beginning of the academic year or there may be events throughout the year.

In schools, the Burgundy Book (Burgundy Book, Appendix III, 7 (b)) sets out provisions for reps to receive lists of new teachers appointed in the workplace and to communicate directly with new starters. You should ask the head teacher directly for the list of new starters.

If you do get a slot at an induction event, you don't need to make a long speech. It's simply an opportunity to introduce yourself, explain what and who the union is and the benefits of joining, and to invite all new starters to join if they're not already a union member. Make sure you take membership forms with you or encourage members to join online. See page 18 for information on how to order more forms and other materials.

Even if you don't get access to an induction event, it's still important to request a list of new starters as you can seek them out individually and talk to them one-to-one about joining the union.

Get access to new teacher welcome events

Some Local Authorities and Multi Academy Trusts hold welcome events for early career teachers. You should get access to these events (see Burgundy Book entitlement on previous page) and use it as an opportunity to introduce yourself, explain what the union does and the benefits of joining.

Remember:

- ✓ It only costs £1 for new teachers to join in the year after achieving qualified teacher status so it shouldn't be a difficult conversation.
- ✓ The NEU produces lots of guidance for trainees, Early Career Teachers, and NQTs so you can point them to the resources at neu.org.uk/induction or to the regular CPD events designed for new teachers.

- ✓ Your district can provide you with new teacher packs to take to these events, including membership forms and relevant publications produced specifically for them.

Everyday recruitment

As well as targeting specific events for new starters, don't forget to recruit throughout the year at every opportunity. Just talking to your colleagues is an important part of making yourself visible as a union rep and letting people know how to join the union. Posters for your staff noticeboard and membership forms are sent to all reps in September and January each year so keep an eye out for these. As a rep you could also consider requesting a slot to speak at an INSET day or a staff meeting.



Having recruitment conversations

If you've never recruited someone to the union before, it can feel a bit daunting opening up a conversation about joining. Even if it feels awkward at first, remember that it gets easier having these conversations with practice and it's worth practising because recruiting new members to the union is one of the most important things you can do as a rep.

Talking to people about joining shouldn't be difficult. Think about why you joined. What do you value about the union? What made you want to become a rep? If you know why you joined and what makes you want to be involved in the union, then you already know how to talk to a potential member about joining.

Before deciding to join, people will need to know the five fundamentals:

Who we are and what we do

It's important not to make any assumptions about what people know already. If someone doesn't really know what the NEU is or what we do, that's fine. You're there to explain how unions are democratic organisations that provide protection, support, representation, and collective voice to workers. You don't need to be an expert on the history of the trade union movement. You just need to be able to clearly explain what the NEU is and what it does. You might want to explain that the NEU is the largest education union in the UK.

What tangible benefits they get out of membership

Be prepared to explain a few benefits of joining. Members benefit from being able to address workplace issues collectively as well as getting workplace representation if they have a problem at work. There is also a free AdviceLine for members, legal representation, and free insurance if they are injured at work or if their property is

damaged or stolen at work. The NEU's national professional development programme with short webinars and longer CPD courses is also an important benefit.

What it costs

It's reasonable for a prospective member to ask what it will cost them to join. It's worth remembering that it's free for students or trainees to join and it's only £1 for members in their first year after qualifying to teach.

There are different rates for standard, support, leadership, retired, and associate members and these get updated annually so check the NEU website for the most up-to-date rates. See p.18 for more information on membership rates.

That it's normal to join

The NEU is the biggest education union in the country and the education sector has one of the largest trade union memberships in the UK. Reassure them that joining the NEU is not an unusual thing to do – it will not mark them out as a troublemaker.

That it's easy to join

There's nothing to stop someone from joining straightaway. Even if you don't have any membership forms to hand, you can point them to neu.org.uk/join to sign up online.

Having a structured conversation

Structured conversations can be a useful tool when asking people to join the union. The following structure might help you to think about how you could talk to colleagues about joining the NEU.

1. Introduction

Don't assume people know you're the rep. Keep it simple and open the conversation with "Hi, I'm [name] and I'm the NEU rep. I'd like to have a quick chat about the union." Ask if they're already a member of the NEU or if they're a member of another union.

2. Listen

It sounds obvious but it's really important to listen to what they're saying. Don't just talk at them. Ask open ended questions. If they have just started at your workplace, ask them how they're finding it. If they're a new teacher, ask how their induction is going. If they've been working there a while ask them what it's been like, how it's changed, and if there are any issues they're concerned about.

3. Frame the issue

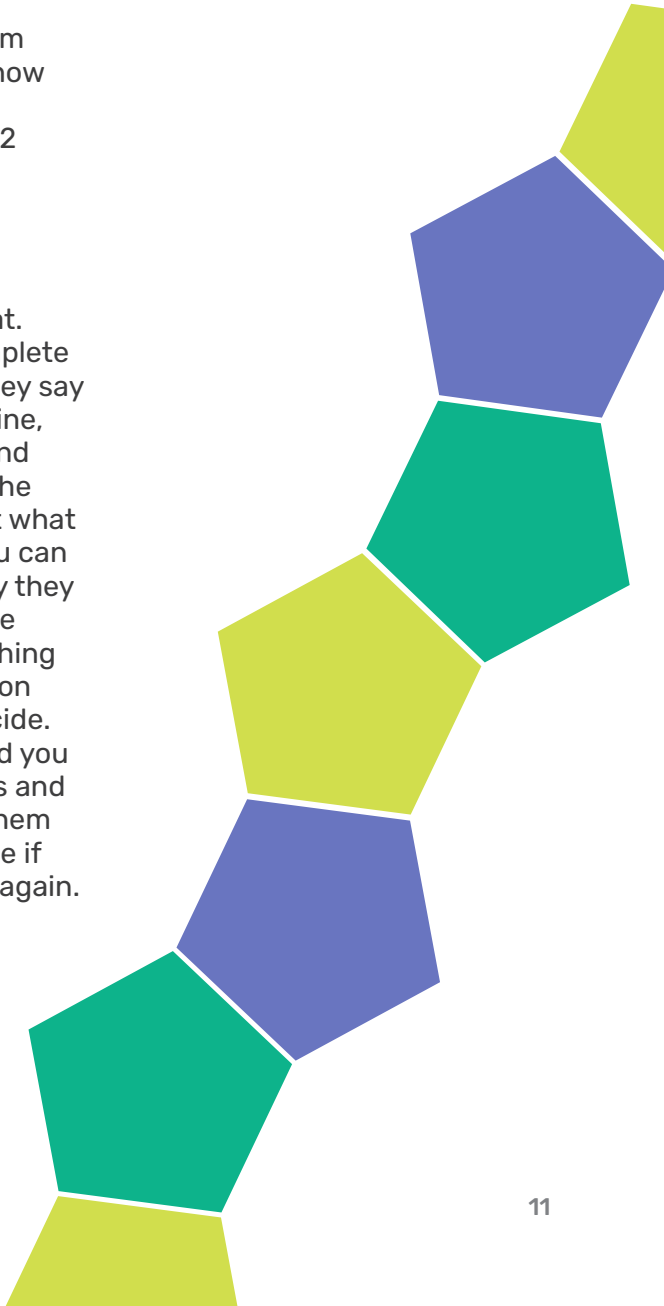
Show them how through collective action, the NEU can improve the workplace. When you were asking them about their experience of the workplace and their issues, they may have mentioned issues that you know the union has successfully campaigned or bargained on. From school funding, to Ofsted, to pay, to workload, to health and safety, the NEU has run major national campaigns, lobbied policy makers, and negotiated at local level.

4. Ask the question and deal with any objections

You've already shown them what the union is about, now for the important bit: "Will you join the NEU?" See p12 for dealing with common objections.

5. Commitment to join

If they say yes, that's great. Offer to help them to complete the form on the spot. If they say no, let them know that's fine, but you'd like to understand why not. Try to continue the conversation and find out what their objections are so you can deal with them. If they say they need more time, that's fine too but ask if there's anything they'd like more information about to help them to decide. Let them know how to find you if they have any questions and that you'll check in with them in a few days/weeks to see if they'd like to talk about it again.



How to deal with objections to joining

When you're asking people to join, you're likely to come across lots of reasons for not joining. Some of these are based on common misconceptions so it's worth thinking about how you might deal with these objections.

"Unions go on strike all the time"

This isn't true. Even at times when there is a lot of media coverage of industrial unrest and strikes, the reality is these are still unusual occurrences, and it is rare to be balloted on strike action. Strike action is a last resort for unions, and it is the members who decide whether or not to vote for industrial action. Legislation governing industrial action means the threshold to call a strike is extremely high.

"I can't afford it"

The NEU benchmarks its membership fees against other unions every year and affordability of the rates is a key consideration when setting the membership fees. Many union members would say you can't afford *not* to be in a union because the protection and support offered is so important in a profession like teaching. Part time rates are available as well as subs holidays for members on maternity leave.

"Everyone is happy here"

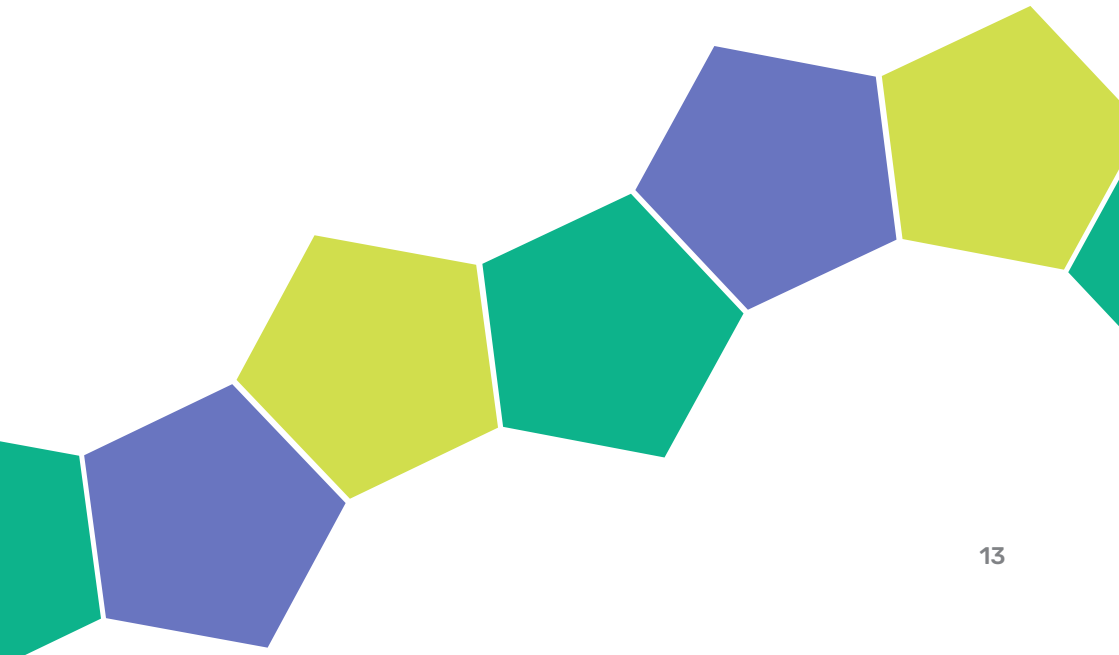
That's great but even in a happy workplace, there are often issues with workload and pay. It's also worth remembering that things can change quickly in any workplace, even a happy one. If a new manager decides to change working practices or takes against a member of staff, the workplace may not feel so happy. Or if a parent makes a complaint against a member of staff, they will want the support of a rep. The NEU cannot help members with issues that pre-date them joining the union so you cannot afford to wait until you have a problem to join.

“I’m not interested in politics”

The NEU is not affiliated to any political party and members may hold a range of political views or simply not see themselves as political. If you are interested in some of the issues that the NEU campaigns on – be it child poverty, school funding, or teacher workload – there are lots of opportunities to get involved but you don’t have to.

“I’m scared to put my head above the parapet”

There’s no reason to be scared. Education is one of the most unionised sectors in the UK. There are likely to be many members in your workplace. Your senior leadership team may also be members of the NEU. Union members are protected in law from being treated unfavourably because of their union affiliation. It’s also worth remembering that you don’t have to put your head above the parapet – your employer does not know who is a member of the union and who is not.



Recruitment case study: **Carla and Roisin**

Roisin Kelly and Carla Topham, joint winners of the 2021/22 NEU Rep of the Year award, managed to triple the number of NEU members in their school but it wasn't always plain sailing.

"We struggled initially to get people to join the union. They were scared of what it might entail and didn't want to cause any problems or trouble. When we started to have wins with our disputes, more and more people joined the union. This gave people the confidence that there was safety in numbers," Roisin explained.



Ask the question

It may sound obvious but the first step in recruiting new members is to ask colleagues to join. You don't have to be a rep to do this. Any NEU member can invite colleagues to join the union. It's particularly important to ask new starters, trainees, and ECTs.

Carla and Roisin agree:

"We approach any new teachers and encourage them to join a union."

Make the union visible

It's also important that the union is visible at work. Posters, leaflets and membership forms are sent into all NEU workplaces in September and January. Officers can order more materials via the NEU website and reps can order materials through their district. Carla and Roisin made sure they promoted the union at every opportunity:

"We have a wall of information, WhatsApp group, meetings and we are always approachable should our members need anything."

Allay people's fears

Usually, if people aren't union members, it's because they've never been asked but sometimes it's because they're worried about what union membership entails. Roisin explains:

"Fear is a big reason people give for not wanting to join, especially if there are ongoing issues in a workplace. Also not wanting to strike stops people. Nobody likes to strike but, in our situation, it started an open dialogue where a lot of things were resolved for the school."

Using the database to check membership in your workplace

If you're an NEU rep, you can easily check who the NEU members are in your workplace. This can help you to map your workplace, to see your membership density (what proportion of the total staff are NEU members), and to keep an eye out for new members and also members who have left the union.

As a rep, you can't update member details on the membership system, you can simply view your members. If a member's details need updating, you should encourage them to update it themselves by logging in to their myNEU account. If that is not possible, the member should contact the membership team (see bottom of p17).



To view members in the workplace where you're a rep, go to [secure.neu.org.uk/ neu-wrap-staff](https://secure.neu.org.uk/neu-wrap-staff)

If you haven't used myNEU before, you will first need to activate your myNEU account at my.neu.org.uk/activate. If you've already activated myNEU and have forgotten your password, you can reset your password at my.neu.org.uk/reset.

To view your members:

- 1. Log in** to the NEU membership database with your membership number and myNEU password.
- 2. Click on** the tab titled Workplace.
- 3. Click the name** of your Workplace.
- 4. Then click on the Members tab** to view NEU members in your workplace.

Note: if you hold more than one role within the union, for example a district officer role, you will need to change the committee position to that of your workplace rep position. To change this, follow the instructions below after logging in to the NEU membership database:

- 1. Click Committees** on the blue task bar.
- 2. Choose Select Own Committee Position.**
- 3. Select** your workplace rep role from the list.
- 4. Hit Save** and then navigate back to the Find tab.

If you have trouble accessing myNEU or the NEU membership database, please contact the Membership Team on **0345 811 8111**, or email **membership@neu.org.uk** for assistance.

Further resources and training

More information about membership fees

It's a good idea to be familiar with the membership fees when you're talking to people about joining. It's a question that is likely to come up so it's good to be prepared. You can check the current rates at neu.org.uk/neu-membership-rates. Members also pay a local fee which is set by each District. Check with your district secretary if you're not sure how much the local fee is.

How to order recruitment materials

The NEU produces materials each year to support recruitment activity in the workplace. Speak to your District or your Regional Office about any resources they have available. You can order posters, membership forms, and other materials online at neu.org.uk/recruitment-materials-order-form.

NEU training for reps

The NEU training programme includes a course that develops reps' recruitment skills. Contact your regional office or check online at neu.org.uk/workplace-reps-training for more information.

Different ways to join

Online

The easiest way to join the union is online at neu.org.uk/join.

By post

You will receive membership forms in the recruitment mailings sent to you at work in January and September each year. Or you can order extra forms or a workplace recruitment pack at any time online at neu.org.uk/recruitment-materials-order-form.

By phone

Members can also join by calling the NEU membership team on **0345 811 8111** (Monday to Friday). Please note that the phone lines are often very busy.



Join now





neu.org.uk