

Unite in TfGM - INDUSTRIAL ACTION FAQ

We know that for some, this will be the first time that you have ever taken part in an industrial action ballot and possible industrial action. The reason we take industrial action is simple: it gets results!

Unite regularly wins improved pay, terms and conditions, defends jobs and defeats bullying management practices through successful industrial action. There are never any guarantees, except for one: when faced with an intransigent employer, if we don't fight, we lose. But if you take action, you can win

DO I HAVE TO INFORM MANAGEMENT THAT I'M STRIKING?

Absolutely not. We recommend that if asked whether you are going to take strike action, you tell management that you have been advised by your union to not to provide this information. It is unlawful for an employer to compile a list of participants in industrial action for the purpose of subjecting those participants to negative treatment

CAN I BE DISMISSED FOR GOING ON STRIKE/TAKING INDUSTRIAL ACTION?

The law protects employees from dismissal for participating in lawful industrial action during the first 12 weeks of that action. This period is extended where an employer has not taken reasonable steps to resolve the dispute, for instance by refusing to reopen negotiations.

Any employer unlawfully dismissing an employee for taking part in official industrial action will either have to reinstate the employee or pay large amounts of compensation. In reality such dismissals are therefore extremely rare

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'M ON LEAVE OR NOT ROSTERED TO WORK ON STRIKE DAYS?

You should carry on as normal & you should not lose any money as you are not on strike.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'M ASKED TO WORK OVERTIME DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISPUTE, BUT WHEN I'M NOT ON STRIKE?

You are entitled to refuse to do any voluntary overtime. If your overtime is not voluntary (i.e. contractual), then you will be required to perform the duties requested.

WILL I LOSE PAY FOR GOING ON STRIKE?

It is highly likely that a company will deduct pay & any related allowances for the time you are on strike & not working. For this reason Unite pays strike pay of £70 per day of strike action as way of part-compensating for the losses our members incur. There will be a process to administer the payments which will be overseen by local representatives & the Regional Office. Your Unite branch will also be contactable for support & we would urge you to speak with your reps or the union if you have any worries

DO I HAVE TO REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH MANAGEMENT WHEN I'M STRIKING?

You do not have to remain in contact with management when striking & should not contact management until you return to work.

MY DEPARTMENT IS NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE STRIKE. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I APPROACH A PICKET LINE?

If Unite members approach a picket line they should advise the pickets that they support the dispute & will not do any work outside of normal contractual duties, nor cover work normally conducted by those workers in dispute. If your employer demands that you do take over the work of those in dispute the union will lawfully resist such demands & could ballot our members for industrial action. Please seek advice from your or officer

WHAT ABOUT AGENCY WORKERS WHO WANT TO SUPPORT THE STRIKES?

We understand that members who work for agencies may want to support strikes by their directly employed colleagues. The advice for agency workers is the same as above. Should any agency worker have concerns around the allocation of shifts in relation to the strikes, please seek advice from your reps and/or officer.

DO I HAVE TO STAND ON A PICKET LINE?

Ideally, yes, but the most important thing is not to attend work on strike days.

Picket lines are a brilliant way of displaying the strength of our union, engaging with colleagues & members of the public & discouraging any colleagues from going into work. We often receive visits from other workers, activists & politicians who want to support our struggle. Unite picket lines have a great reputation for being fun: the best have a carnival atmosphere, where union members enjoy music and food, & new friendships are forged.

During strikes we often organise other events to promote our campaign, for instance lobbies & demonstrations. There will be solidarity events like this planned during your strikes.

WHAT IF I'M APPROACHED BY THE MEDIA?

If you speak to the media, there is a risk that the employer will seek to discipline you. Any interviews should be provided anonymously, & we generally recommend that you forward all media enquiries to a Union official. Likewise, members should not post anything derogatory about the employer on social media.

I'M NOT IN THE UNION BUT WANT TO SHOW MY SUPPORT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

You should join Unite and take the same action as your colleagues!

Only union members are legally protected & entitled to strike pay. If you join Unite to support the strikes, the Union will support you.

In many disputes we have people who were originally going into work on the day of a strike, then changing their minds & deciding not to cross the picket line - joining Unite to get legal protection for taking strike action & receiving strike pay, showing solidarity with their colleagues, & strengthening the union's campaign.

If you have an other questions not covered here, please contact your Unite reps or officer. They should be able to provide you with additional information.