

Mark Wareham

Membership number 5753952

Seeking nomination for the Male seat, south west region
National Executive Committee (NEC) 2021 elections



Dear colleague,

I am seeking support from your branch or group as a candidate for election to the regional male seat on our NEC and I would very much welcome a nomination from your branch or organisation. I put myself forward as being a person that you can trust to represent your views and interests and to regularly engage with you between elections. It would be my privilege to serve you on our NEC.

The challenges ahead

We face tough times ahead with a Tory government who have a large majority facing a post-EU and, hopefully soon, post-Covid world and we will need UNISON to be geared up to fight. We must battle to preserve employment rights, to ensure that working class people can access and enjoy decent retirement and to protect our public services. The impact of the response to the pandemic, which is likely to disproportionately affect our Black members and Women, is sure to present us with serious issues because austerity is in the genes of the nasty party. Our union movement is the hope for all working people and I would like to offer to do my part in being part of our leadership team who will be charged with steering UNISON over the next couple of years.

Something about me

I was born and raised in a working-class family in Shaftesbury in Dorset. My dad was a window cleaner and my mum was a school caretaker who was for a time a steward with the National Union of Public Employees in the 80's during the period of the Thatcher government cuts. My upbringing gave me a passion for social justice and a love of the union movement. After school I worked in the tax department of Friends Provident (mutual life assurance and pensions) in Salisbury, where I became an active member of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union.

I benefitted from our movement's dedication to lifelong learning and was awarded the Ian Mikardo scholarship from MSF to attend Ruskin College in Oxford, a union supported further education college, where I was awarded a diploma in Labour Studies. As a result of this opportunity, I then went into higher education and was awarded an upper second degree in Sociology / Social Policy from Cardiff University.

After university I got a job in the supplies department of Salisbury District Hospital and immediately joined UNISON and soon became a steward and Branch Treasurer. In 1999 I was first elected as Branch Secretary of Salisbury Health branch and the following year I was first elected as Secretary (later Chair) of the joint union Staff Side at Salisbury District Hospital.

From June 2012 until November 2020 I held the region's general seat on our Health Group Executive and after that was elected to our Operational Services national occupational group. In 2014 I was first elected as Secretary of the south west regional meeting of NHS Staff Sides and in the same year I was Secretary of the Salisbury & District Trades Union Council. In 2017 I was elected Secretary (the co-Chair) of the Staff Sides group on Bath, Wiltshire and Swindon integrated care (STP) Partnership Forum.

In 2019 my branch won the regional branch of the year award and in my time with the branch we have grown by over 50%, thanks to the day-to-day hard graft of representing members, responding to their needs, good communications and through organisation and campaigning.

Throughout my over 23 years in UNISON, I have also been a member of the regional health committee, attended many regional councils, served on the regional committee (current member of the Development and Organisation Strategic Committee) and have been a delegate to numerous union events, training courses and conferences. I have also been on countless local and national demonstrations and have organised industrial action and local pickets.

I have also worked for our members in local government because for about eleven years I had a job as an administrator, campaigner and caseworker with our old Salisbury District Branch which later merged to become our Wiltshire Branch. One of my proudest achievements in that role was playing a part in a successful local campaign against the privatisation of council housing.

I have also represented members in the public, the private and charitable sectors and have helped provide members with support on almost every sort of issue that arises in their working lives. I think I am familiar with what matters most to our members and potential members and what our union needs to offer them to succeed.

I have experience recruiting members, growing the union, organising branches, campaigning and taking action, representing members, working with other unions, supporting our equality agenda and self-organisation, developing colleagues and promoting our union. Whilst I was on our national Health Group Executive we faced many big issues including privatisation (I am proud of helping see off a local subsidiary company plan here in Salisbury), pension, pay and conditions changes, and I played a full part in our work on those issues and engaged with branches and our region.

My politics

I am a liberal socialist and was a member of the Labour Party for about 30 years on and off since first joining when I was 16. I held many officer roles in that party including CLP Secretary and standing as a candidate in council elections and for parliament in 2001. I was a strong supporter of Corbyn's leadership and am really saddened at seeing how he is being treated by the current leadership and the apparent direction of travel in terms of party policy. Whilst I still a Labour voter, I am currently not a member of a political party.

Building our union

I am proud of our union. We are undoubtedly the best union in the UK, even if there are some things that I think we could change for the better. I do not think that our legal support processes are currently completely focused on supporting individual members but appear to be too skewed towards cost management and the threshold for judging the reasonable prospects of success for legal challenges is set too high. Some of our membership rules are outdated and cumbersome and subscription rates need urgent review. Our organisational structures are also inconsistent and not fit for practice in some cases.

I think that lay activists try their absolute best given limited resources and that branches generally do a fantastic job. In my opinion our branch structures and strong local resourcing are one of the main strengths of our union and enable us to better organise and support members in the workplace and in our communities. If elected I will do all I can to ensure that branch activists are valued, respected and supported in their roles.

I would like to work on the NEC in helping to make our union work better for branches, activists and, most importantly, for our members. We are building on strong foundations and an already great union.

Please lend us your support

In this election I am not standing as part of a section or political grouping, we are all just UNISON. I am however supporting Alison Evans (south west region, female seat) and I hope that if your branch nominates me that you also consider nominating Alison as well. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via my personal e-mail – mwareham44@gmail.com
Full details of the nomination process and timetable is available via - www.unison.org.uk/elections