

National Executive Council Elections 2023: Nomination requests

<p>Sara Evans Nottinghamshire County Branch 14014818 Standing in the East Midlands Reserved (Low Paid) Seat</p> 	<p>Nathalie Birkett Nottinghamshire County Branch 8034871 Standing in the East Midlands Region Female seat</p> 
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Dear Branch Secretary,

We are writing to ask your branch to consider nominating us for the following seats for the 2023 NEC elections:

- Candidate 1 Sara Evans East Midlands Region Reserved (Low Paid) seat
- Candidate 2 Nathalie Birkett East Midlands Region Female Seat

All UNISON members face the threat of a spiralling cost-of-living crisis and now we face further austerity from a Tory Government which is determined to make us pay for the economic crisis. These elections are hugely important in determining the way that UNISON tackles these issues. We are standing in solidarity with the Time for Real Change (TFRC) majority on the current NEC. We fully support the democratisation of the union and making the union's strategy and organisation fit the needs of the current situation facing our members.

Experience and background

Candidate 1

I work as a cook at a short breaks unit for adults with learning disabilities. I am a senior steward with Nottinghamshire County Council branch. I am the low paid member for the East Midlands on Unison's Local Government Service Group. I also sit on the Regional Welfare Committee and Regional Women's Network. As a low paid member I understand the struggles that many members have with balancing work and life. Trying to become active within Unison is not easy for low paid members. I want to work with the NEC to make it easier for all members to be active in Unison. TFRC have given me the opportunity and belief that Unison can truly be a members led union. I will work tirelessly to give low paid members a strong voice in Unison.

Candidate 2

I am a senior steward in my branch and have held positions on both the regional and national women's committees. I am accountable and I am committed to the role I have held on the NEC for the last two years. I have been a member of several committees including, Services to Members, Finance and Resource Management and Policy Development and Campaigns. TFRC have made a real positive difference over the last two years and my contribution has assisted these changes to both the union and especially our members. I have always believed that members are the absolute heart of this union and I have and will always work to the benefit of members in everything that I do. We are facing unprecedented challenges and therefore it is essential that there is full involvement of activists, members, and officials at every level, and I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure this happens.

What we stand for

UNISON must be a member-led union – We believe this means that elected members should run our union, not selected full-time officials. We want to work with all our paid officials, but it is members and their elected representatives that should be the real leaders. **We need to be an organising, not a servicing, union** – we cannot solve all of our members' problems on a one-by-one basis. Members will always need individual support, but the focus should be on collective action. We need to increase UNISON's collective and organising activities and to empower our members. **Every large city and county** should have a proud UNISON resource centre in the high street: we need to make it as easy as possible for members to find us. We must present UNISON as a vibrant, democratic, fighting and organising union.

The pay crisis – UNISON must end the scourge of low pay. For too long UNISON has failed to adequately fight poverty pay, pay freezes and below-inflation deals. We cannot simply approach pay negotiations the way that UNISON's leadership has done in the past. Hikes in the price of fuel, heating and food are seriously impacting our members. No UNISON member should have to rely on food banks. We need fully funded and staffed public services. Members should not pay the cost of Tory austerity. To achieve this, we want **more cooperative relationships with other unions**. We should work together whenever we can.

We must support members needing to take industrial action. Strike pay rates have increased substantially, but there is more to do. UNISON only has a national strike fund of £21 million. This must change if we are to show employers and government, we mean business. Also, we need to ensure that every region supports branches who need to carry out effective strike action.

UNISON's finances – We need full disclosure and transparency as to how members' money is spent. We must make best use of the surpluses made nationally and locally during the pandemic. Also, we must review UNISON's large property estate and where appropriate, free up resources for organising. We must continue to bring the UNISON Staff Pension scheme deficit down to manageable levels. Members' subs should not be required to keep the scheme afloat. **We should insource all outsourced UNISON services wherever feasible**, based on our trade union values and our aspirations for our union. **We need a green agenda within UNISON**, including an audit of UNISON company cars and the proliferation of meetings requiring members and staff to travel long distances.

We believe that UNISON should play a positive but challenging role in the Labour Party. UNISON resources and influence should be used to promote the removal of anti-trade union laws, public delivery of public services and a new green deal that tackles the climate emergency through the creation of green, well-paid, union jobs.

Equalities in UNISON are central to our vision. There have been some major developments over the last two years. But there is much more to do to make equality a reality through our entire union, not just its NEC but at all tiers of our union, including within its staffing.

Legal advice – We must review UNISON’s main legal services contract and particularly the difficulties branch secretaries have accessing timely employment law advice.

We need a robust and effective review of staffing to ensure that the great work our staff do is as efficient and meaningful to members as it can be. **We believe UNISON members should decide whether our most senior roles should be elected.**

We must end once and for all the punitive culture of disciplinary action. Disciplinary investigations into members take far too long, with no regard for welfare. We must continue to look at these processes from top to bottom and end their use to resolve political differences.

We are confident that the ideas we support will build on the progress made over the last two years. We would be grateful for your nomination.

Yours sincerely

Sara Evans
Nathalie Birkett