



# MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

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GMB LONDON REGION

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The future is in your hands

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MEMBERS

FIRST



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# Welcome to GMB

GMB is a general trade union. We organise our members so they have a voice at work and can defend and improve conditions of employment. We also provide representation in the workplace.

We are one of the countries largest trade unions, with over 500,000 members in the public and private sectors, in employers such as the NHS, schools and local authorities, ASDA, the security industry, aviation workers and in manufacturing. Anyone in employment has a legal right to be a member of a trade union and to be represented by GMB.

GMB London Region includes members north of the River Thames, the Home Counties including Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex and parts of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Peterborough.

GMB is here to help you with your employment circumstances. It is always best to get in contact to gain advice before you think a situation might become more formal. We assist with a range of issues such as contract changes, redundancies, sickness absences, capability meetings, grievances, disciplinaries to name but a few!

# Structure & Democracy



# Representatives (Shop Stewards)

Our representatives in your workplace (also known as 'reps' or 'shop stewards') are the backbone of the union. They are members who volunteer to be trained by GMB, to help their colleagues in the workplace. The duties of GMB reps range from informal support through to representing members at grievance and disciplinary meetings and in negotiations with employers.

We fully train all our shop stewards so that they learn the skills and legal knowledge necessary for organising, campaigning, negotiating and representing our members.

After their initial training they may also choose to further specialise with additional training in different areas such as health and safety, advanced employment law and equalities.

Our reps are volunteers but usually receive paid time off from their employment to undertake their training and the duties associated with their role. In some workplaces there is senior steward on part-time or full-time paid release, known as a 'Convenor'. If you are interested in becoming a representative/shop steward, please contact your Branch Secretary for further information.

## Your Branch

Every member of GMB belongs to a branch, which they are allocated to based on their workplace, employer or industry. All members are encouraged to attend the regular branch meetings and take part in the democracy of GMB. Branch Secretaries should let members know when and where the meetings take place.

The branch is the building block of GMB and is responsible for providing advice and representation to our members.

The goal of each branch is to organise workplaces so that all employees are members of the union and to ensure that fully trained shop stewards are in place to assist members with representation and negotiations on their behalf.

You can find the details of your branch, including your Branch Secretary on your membership card or by contacting the London Region office. The Branch Secretary is responsible for arranging the branch meetings and coordinating the representation of members. Branch Secretaries play a pivotal role in democratic and industrial well-being of each branch.

Branch meetings are held at least four times a year and all members are entitled to attend. Each branch has a committee which includes the Branch Secretary and other branch officers – President, Equality Officer, Young Members Officer, Race Officer and two Auditors. The branch committee is elected by members and normally serves for four years.

## Regional Council

London Regional Council is the regional governing body of the union. It is made up of representatives elected by our branches every 4 years. The Council elects a Regional President and Regional Committee who are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day business of the region. London Regional Council meets every six months and ensures that the region is managed effectively.

## CEC

Central Executive Council (CEC) is the national governing body of GMB. The CEC meets at least seven times a year and consists of lay members of the union plus the General Secretary. It is elected by postal ballot of GMB members every four years and individuals seeking to stand must be Regional Council members. The CEC is headed by a lay member President and Vice President.

For practical reasons its business is run by four committees:

- Finance & General Purposes (F&GP)
- Organisation
- Political, European and international (PEI)
- Appeals

## Where can I find the policies of the union?

Our policies are largely set by GMB Congress. After each Congress a new policy guide is updated incorporating the decisions of that Congress.

You can access the latest policy guide from the Research & Policy Section of the GMB national website [www.gmb.org.uk/our-union/research-and-policy](http://www.gmb.org.uk/our-union/research-and-policy)

## Building the Union

Every union member is entitled to call on the union for support and representation if they face a disciplinary hearing or have raised a complaint or grievance at work.

That's fine if you only want to call on your union in times of trouble or when problems arise.

This approach hands the day-to-day control of your life at work to your employer, leaving you to react to the employer's initiatives as and when they arise. In the GMB, we believe that workers themselves should have far greater influence over workplace issues – whether this be hours of work, rates of pay or health and safety.

If the union is organised and strong in your workplace you can take the initiative with your employer, be proactive in raising concerns or securing improvements and have a far greater say over your life at work.

The law requires that employers recognise unions for negotiating and consultation, where a majority of employees want it. Many employers will also voluntarily recognise unions simply because of the strength of union membership and because working with unions, on things such as workplace policies, is seen as a good thing for all.

# You can help build the union in your workplace:



Talk to your colleagues about **issues that you see as important** in your workplace + the areas where improvement could and should be made



Talk to your colleagues **about union membership**



Encourage your colleagues to join the GMB



Become a GMB shop steward

# How GMB will help you:



Provide **support and advice** about approaching your employer **for recognition**



Help you **elect representatives / shop stewards**



Provide **training and support** for representatives / shop stewards



Help you **get organised at work**



Help you **negotiate improvements and solutions** to issues you and your colleagues identify as important

# Representation



WE POWER  
THE FUTURE

GMB  
UNION

GMB  
UNION

## Disciplinary hearings

If you are told you may face a disciplinary investigation you should contact your GMB shop stewards or Branch Secretary as soon as possible for advice and support.

If the matter proceeds to a disciplinary you should receive, in writing, details of any disciplinary charges you face before you attend the hearing.

Your employer will normally arrange a disciplinary hearing which will be carried out by a manager who may be accompanied by an HR representative.

You have a legal right to bring your trade union representative with you to the meeting. When you are given a date for the meeting you should contact your GMB representative or Branch Secretary and ask for representation. If they are unable to make the date given by the company you have a right for the meeting to be rescheduled.

After the meeting you will normally receive a decision in writing. If you are unhappy you can appeal and an appeal meeting will take place.

**For more information you can also check the ACAS website: [www.acas.org.uk/codes-of-practice](http://www.acas.org.uk/codes-of-practice)**

## Points to remember

- Always ask for and read your organisation's disciplinary policy.
- Ask for a copy of the notes afterwards so that you can agree they accurately reflect what was said.
- Keep a copy of any letters, memorandums, minutes or documents which relate to your disciplinary. These may be needed if we take the matter further or refer it to our solicitors.
- During a disciplinary hearing you can ask for a break at any time to discuss matters in private with your GMB representative.
- If you want to appeal the decision, be careful not to miss the deadline.

You should be aware that there are strict time limits by which claims must be lodged with the employment tribunal.

It is also now mandatory to attempt conciliation via ACAS first.

Please note you will not normally be able to receive our assistance for matters that arose prior to when you joined the union.

## Grievances

If you have a problem at work, you should first speak to your immediate supervisor or manager about the problem. Matters can often be resolved at an early stage through discussion.

If the problem is not resolved put your grievance in writing. You should set out what your complaint is about giving as much detail as you can to your employer and set out how you believe your grievance can be resolved.

Your employer must then arrange a meeting to discuss the grievance. The meeting will normally be with a manager who may be accompanied by an HR representative.

You have a legal right to bring your trade union representative with you to the meeting. When you are given a date for the meeting you should contact your GMB representative or Branch Secretary and ask for representation. If they are unable to make the date given by the company, you have a right for the meeting to be rescheduled.

After the meeting you will normally receive a decision in writing.

If you are unhappy, you can appeal, and an appeal

meeting will take place.

For more information you can also check the ACAS website: <https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-guide-to-discipline-and-grievances-at-work>

## Points to remember

- Always ask for a copy of your organisation's grievance policy.
- Ask for a copy of the notes afterwards so that you can agree they accurately reflect what was said.
- Keep a copy of any letters, memorandums, minutes or documents which relate to your grievance. These may be important if we need to take the matter further or refer the matter to our solicitors.
- During a grievance hearing you can ask for a break at any time to discuss matters in private with your GMB representative.
- If you want to appeal the decision, be careful not to miss the deadline.
- You should be aware that there are strict time limits by which claims must be lodged with the employment tribunal.

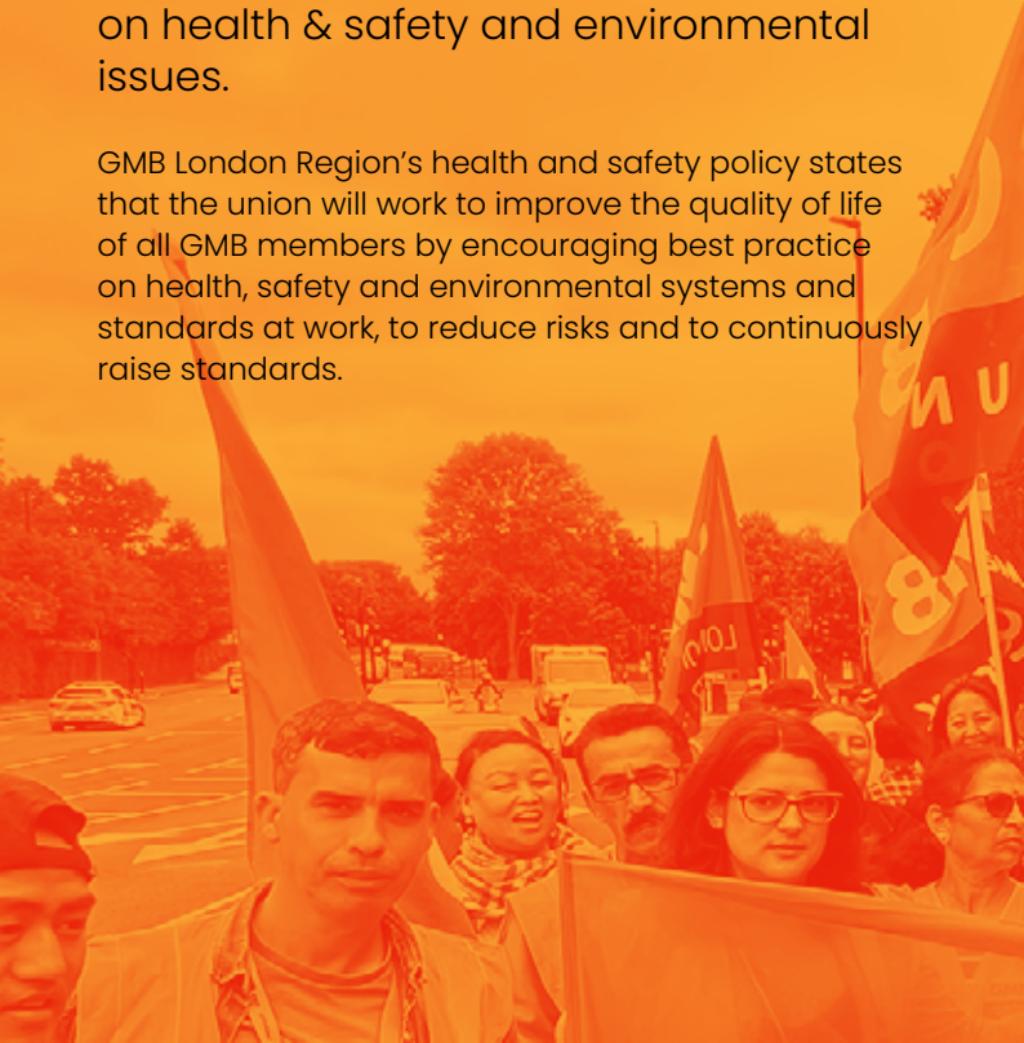
It is also mandatory to attempt conciliation via ACAS first.

**Please note you will not normally be able to receive our assistance for matters that arose prior to when you joined the union.**

# Health & Safety

GMB is recognised as a leading union on health & safety and environmental issues.

GMB London Region's health and safety policy states that the union will work to improve the quality of life of all GMB members by encouraging best practice on health, safety and environmental systems and standards at work, to reduce risks and to continuously raise standards.



The GMB Health & Safety Department aims to develop this policy in a practical way and take steps to ensure that where our members work we strive to make their workplace safer.

The GMB has a distinctive approach to dealing with health & safety matters. We support our workplace-based Safety Representatives who are safety watchdogs, who represent their members interests on health & safety matters.

Making the workplace safer for our members is our key priority. The starting point for the GMB approach is to reduce accidents, ill health, hazards in general and to take action to minimise or remove these as much as possible.

The GMB does not expect Safety Reps to do the job alone. To be successful they need the help and support from their members, other safety reps and shop stewards

GMB Safety reps also have a Regional Organiser, GMB branch and a Regional Health and Safety Officer who they can call on for advice and support when necessary.

# Legal UNIONLINE

Put 0300 333 0303 in your phone and visit [www.unionline.co.uk](http://www.unionline.co.uk) to see a full list of all the legal services available to you.

You can call us about any employment law or personal injury law problem and we will provide legal advice if you are a GMB member.



**unionline.co.uk**



**0300 333 0303**

Our employment law service provides complete advice and representation to GMB members at no cost, subject to the rules of the Union – if you are worried about anything at work, then call us. Our accident and injury service is also free of charge to GMB members and their families. Don't call a number you have seen on the TV or in an advert, call UnionLine.

UnionLine can offer something no other service can give you – 100 per cent of your damages with no deductions for GMB members and their families.

Worried about debt, or a bad landlord? Call UnionLine. UnionLine can also assist with criminal and regulatory issues relating to your work.

All GMB members are also entitled to a free will (a service that would normally cost £200-£300) and can receive discounted conveyancing services through UnionLine.

Whatever problems you have we will try and help you, providing quality local legal advice. **So put 0300 333 0303 in your phone and remember, GMB is your union and this is your union law firm.** It is not out to make a fast buck, its job is to provide the best legal service in the country to GMB members.

# UNIONLINE

THE LAW FIRM OWNED BY GMB MEMBERS



**SUFFERED AN INJURY?**

**WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK**

If you make your personal injury claim with UNIONLINE, you'll keep 100% of the compensation we win for you.

We're owned by and run for GMB members – not to make a profit for shareholders. Contact our legal experts today.

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**0300 333 0303**  
**[unionline.co.uk](http://unionline.co.uk)**





I would like to say a massive thank you for all your help in dealing with my tribunal case.

It just goes to show that if you believe you are right and have good people behind you, **the little person can win over the big company**"

- GMB Member,  
Employment Tribunal Case

# Equality



GMB London Region works to promote equality and diversity across all our structures.

We have a number of self-organised groups (called SOGs) which fit into our equality strands as follows:

### **GMB Ability**

for members with disabilities

### **GMB Shout!**

for members who identify as LGBT+

### **GMB Young Workers**

for members aged under 30

### **GMB Race**

for ethnically diverse/global majority heritage members

### **GMB Sisters**

for members who identify as women

Contact GMB London for more information from our Equalities Team by emailing [infolondon@gmb.org.uk](mailto:infolondon@gmb.org.uk)

# Education & Training



GMB London Region's Education and Training Department provides a service which enables our members and shop stewards to develop skills and knowledge that are essential to promoting and protecting the collective interests of our members, not only in the workplace, but in society as a whole.

The Department runs an extensive range of courses for GMB Representatives and GMB members. We aim to ensure that these courses can be delivered flexibly depending on the needs of our representatives and members.

GMB London Region aims to support Representatives in their role, whether this deals with members issues and problems, negotiating with management, organising and recruiting new members or health and safety issues such as building a safer workplace.

GMB London Region believes passionately that by equipping our representatives with confidence, up to date knowledge and skills is one of the key ways in which we are able to make the GMB more effective. The strength of the GMB in the workplace and society, ultimately depends on the involvement and quality of its members individually and collectively.

London Region has the John Cope Trust set up for members interested in pursuing courses or further education funded by the region. Please look on the London Region website for more information. If any members are interested, they will need to be endorsed by the branch.

GMB has partnered with The Skills Network to offer our members access to accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses which are designed to boost skills and confidence. The courses provide flexible online working, allowing you to complete any course in your own time and at your own pace.

## Political Networks

GMB has built up a large group of political activists within the London Region, who have come out on many occasions to campaign on issues important to the movement and build links with those who make decisions at local, regional and national levels.

These include campaigns such as protecting the NHS, fighting for our members in local government facing austerity cuts, affordable housing, equalities and improving employment rights.

As one of the largest represented unions on London councils, we run a Councillor Network for any GMB members who are local councillors, to meet other councillors, gain further training and provide support on GMB policy.

GMB London branches also have an option to appoint Branch Political Officers. These elected GMB members hold quarterly meetings where we discuss the political activities of the region, supply political support and feature guest speakers to provide insight into local and national politics.

If you want any further information or are thinking of becoming involved in any of the above networks, please let us know by emailing [gmbpolitics@gmb.org.uk](mailto:gmbpolitics@gmb.org.uk).

## Retired members

You can remain a member of GMB after your retirement and qualify for a host of member benefits listed overleaf such as free wills, legal assistance for personal injury claims, discounted insurance, and funeral benefit worth up to £400. We are also keen for our retired members to join our activist's network to join our campaigning across the region.

Our GMB Retired Members' Association (RMA) is a group for retired GMB members who want to stay involved in union campaigns and activities. The RMA works to provide practical assistance to members and the wider union, campaigning for issues affecting retirees like pensions and public services. The RMA holds regular meetings to discuss key matters that members want the union to focus on.

If you are retiring contact our membership department by:

Email: [london.membership@gmb.org.uk](mailto:london.membership@gmb.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 8202 8272

# Member Benefits

As a GMB member you are entitled to a wide range of benefits.



**Free Will**

UnionLine on 0300 333 0303  
or [www.unionline.co.uk](http://www.unionline.co.uk)

**Discounted Car Insurance**

LV= on 0800 756 8306 or  
[www.lv.com/gmb](http://www.lv.com/gmb)

**Discounted Home Insurance**

UIA on 01438 761 767

**Discounted Life Cover**

GMB Protect on 0800 033 4181

**GMB Credit Union**

For easy access saving schemes  
or fair, flexible and fast loans go to  
[gmbcreditunion.com](http://gmbcreditunion.com) or 0161 486 1777

**Funeral benefit**

A funeral benefit payment is available  
in the event of the death of a member.  
Payment is made to the next of kin. For  
further details and benefit rules contact  
GMB 020 8202 8272



# GMB Rulebook

GMB is governed by its rule book and every member of GMB is bound by the rules set out in the book.



## GMB rulebook

GMB rules are made by GMB members and determine the structure, democracy and constitution of the union. The rule book also details arrangements for GMB's Full Time Officials, Regions, Finance, Branches and contributions and benefits.

Every second GMB Congress has the status of a 'rule amendment Congress' which means that ordinary GMB members can seek to change the union's rules via amendments submitted through their branches. The union's Governing body - the Central Executive Council - can propose rule amendments which are voted on by GMB members at any GMB Congress.

The GMB rule book covers every aspect of the work of GMB and how its lay democracy works. If you are a GMB member and would like a copy of the rule book, please contact your local GMB office or visit our website.

As a GMB member you are entitled to be considered for GMB legal assistance and representation at work for any issues that have occurred after you joined GMB. For any problems that pre-date your GMB membership you will only receive telephone advice.

You can find a copy of our rulebook online at [www.gmb.org.uk/rulebook](http://www.gmb.org.uk/rulebook)

## Contact us

Let us know of any changes in your circumstances; we're here to help and support our members:

- Moving home
- New job
- Retired
- Redundancy
- Suffering ill health
- Change in personal circumstances

## Find us online

 [www.gblondon.org.uk](http://www.gblondon.org.uk)

 [@GMBLondonRegion](https://twitter.com/GMBLondonRegion)

 [GMBLondonRegion](https://www.facebook.com/GMBLondonRegion)

Be sure to visit the website for the latest regional news and events. The National website is [www.gmb.org.uk](http://www.gmb.org.uk) and in the Members Area MyGMB you will find GMB Resources and materials.

### General Enquiries

 [infolondon@gmb.org.uk](mailto:infolondon@gmb.org.uk)

### Membership Enquiries

 [London.membership@gmb.org.uk](mailto:London.membership@gmb.org.uk)

### Member Support

 [supportlondon@gmb.org.uk](mailto:supportlondon@gmb.org.uk)

# Your nearest GMB office

## Regional Office

John Cope House,  
152 Brent Street, Hendon  
NW4 2DP  
**Tel:** 020 8202 8272

## Hayes Office

Paul Kenny House  
213 Church Road,  
Hayes, Middx UB3 2LG  
**Tel:** 020 8573 6969

## Southend Office

41 Queens Road,  
Southend-On-Sea, Essex  
SS1 1LT  
**Tel:** 01702 390512

## Luton Office

Second Floor,  
Jansel House,  
Hitchin Road, Stopsley,  
LUTON, LU2 7XH  
**Tel:** 01582 404842

## Norwich Office

9 Norwich Business Park,  
Whiting Road, Norwich  
NR4 6DJ  
**Tel:** 01603 626 492

## Hainault Office

(Organising Team)  
2nd Floor,  
65 New North Road  
Hainault, Ilford IG6 2UE  
**Tel:** 020 8518 9200

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