



Central Executive Council Special Report

GMB TRAINING AND EDUCATION

REPORT TO ANNUAL CONGRESS 2016

Bournemouth International Centre

CONGRESS - SUNDAY 5 JUNE - MONDAY 6 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm

SECTION CONFERENCES- TUESDAY 7 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm

CONGRESS - WEDNESDAY 8 JUNE

9.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm

CONGRESS - THURSDAY 9 JUNE

9.30 am - Close of business

Introduction

This GMB Congress Special Report sets out where we are currently with workplace organiser training and explains the challenges that face us in the future. We find ourselves in an ever changing world and if we are to provide the best possible training and development for our reps we need to be able to adapt to our new surroundings.

The main recommendation from this paper is that we start with a review of the training and support we provide for our new reps. It is essential that we make sure that those GMB members who choose to stand up on behalf of their fellow members get the best possible start to their role as GMB representatives.

Background

The Government is cutting the funding that colleges receive in order to run Trade Union Education. A significant part of our training is provided by colleges and the funding cut for GMB amounts to the equivalent of at least £0.5million. This amounts to a 50% cut and it's possible that further cuts will follow.

This means that the number of colleges offering trade union courses will reduce and that we will face charges to put on courses that are currently run for free. GMB is working with the TUC, other unions and the colleges to ensure that we are able to continue to offer courses once the cuts have taken place.

The cuts are obviously unwelcome and are a further direct attack on trade unions.

Most GMB Regions use colleges to run courses and we will now need to look at whether this system is sustainable. There has been a growing sense for some years that we risk our control of the quality and consistency of the delivery of our training through "contracting out" our offer to third parties and that more of our basic training should be provided in house. The funding cuts prompt us to look at this more closely.

There is some variation across the Regions as to the types of courses that are available to reps although all Regions offer Initial Support and Training (IST) and a standardised induction course for new reps. These standard elements were introduced several years ago but have been delivered in different ways across Regions since then. The Government funding cuts prompt us to review and standardise how we deliver training and development to our new representatives.

At present our training courses can exclude some new reps as they are often held during term time only, in local colleges on weekdays, and during the hours of 9 to 5 – and in some cases spread over 10 or 12 weeks. A proportion of reps do not make it to their induction training despite having received their Initial Support and Training session with their Officer and in some cases there is too long a delay in getting on their first course.

Future Challenges

The funding cut described above is the most pressing challenge that faces all Trade Unions. Plans are already in place to deal with the immediate impact this will have but we need to think for the longer term. The cuts are one part of a Government agenda that is intended to damage our ability to stand up for our members in the workplace. Facility Time and time off to attend courses is also under attack in the Public Sector and we can expect this to creep into other areas. We obviously need to stand firm with employers who seek to restrict training opportunities for our activists.

Our workplaces are changing, with many of our members and reps not working typical 9 to 5 shift patterns. This has always been the case but shorter working weeks and days, weekend working, short hours contracts, term time only working, etc are now much more prevalent.

Also, a number of members volunteer for roles as activists or contacts but do not want to take on the full role of Workplace Organiser (and consequently either do not want to, or cannot, commit the time needed to attend a full GMB training programme).

We are now in a world where working hours are much more complicated for our reps, where there is increased pressure not to take time off for union duties or for union training, and where our volunteer activists have a range of different roles. This means we need to think about how we can be flexible in the ways in which we offer training.

Currently, we use very little technology to aid the delivery of the training and support we offer GMB representatives. At a time where Primary School kids routinely use iPads in the classroom and most organisations offer access to information and learning via the Internet, we need to look at how we can use technology to supplement and enhance (but not replace) the training we currently provide.

For GMB@work to be successful we need to ensure that we have well trained, motivated and active representatives. This means ensuring that reps get the developmental training they need when they need it and we need to take stock to look at how we can deliver this.

Review of Training

There is a lot to be done and some priorities are more pressing than others. In the first instance, we will be carrying out a review of Rep Training with the following terms of reference:

To look at the way reps training fits into how the GMB as a whole develops our activists and help them grow the union, including:

- What GMB wants Reps to be able to do at the end of their IST and ten day induction
- How the IST and induction can be aligned to deliver this
- How we ensure that the induction is delivered in a way that helps to bind new reps to the aims and values of GMB and the organising principles behind GMB@Work
- How we can secure a stable platform for GMB rep training in difficult financial circumstances that will withstand the inevitable pressures created by cuts to trade union education funding
- How we can ensure we have the right tutors delivering the right course content
- Improving the link between classroom training and the on the job support and coaching provided by Officers
- The wider provision of training opportunities for reps.

This is not going to be a review that takes years to conclude or where you don't hear anything about it for months or years to come. It will start immediately after Congress and will be concluded by the end of 2016. We will be reporting back to Congress 2017 on what we have done and the improvements that have been made.

We will be working with the Regional Secretaries to ensure that the review is done in collaboration with those affected by it. We will also be asking reps to give us their views by a survey which will be issued shortly.

Summary

We face the following challenges in how we deliver training for GMB Representatives:

- Government funding cuts
- Attacks on facility time and time off for training
- How we can deliver more training "in house"
- Changes to the work patterns and availability of reps
- How we can make better use of technology to support training

We will be addressing these concerns through a review of training, which will be concluded by the end of 2016.