

Foster Care Workers' Branch Constitution

Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain

1. Branch Name

The branch shall be called "Foster Care Workers' Branch" of the IWGB and will henceforth be referred to as "the branch".

2. Objects

- a. To improve and protect the terms and conditions of the members;
- b. To promote the primacy of members' own decision making in all matters covered by the branch constitution, and in the development of all of the branch's policies;
- c. To preserve, promote, and protect the independence of the branch;
- d. To settle disputes between the members and their employers and/or contractors;
- e. To initiate movements for increased rates of pay, or improved working conditions;
- f. Cooperate, directly or indirectly, with the work of any organisation, local, national, or international, which holds objects or policies which are similar to those of the branch.

3. Membership

Open to all people who work or have worked as foster carers for either public or private entities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

4. Fee Structure

- a. Primary member - £13 per individual per month
- b. Second household member - £6 per individual per month
- c. Additional household members - £3 per individual per month

5. Branch Structure

- a. The branch's supreme decision making body shall be the Branch Executive Committee, which is composed of Branch Officers and Regional Group Coordinators. The Branch Executive Committee shall meet at a minimum once every month. Branch Officers are elected by the membership, subject to the caveats contained in Appendix 1. Regional Group Coordinators are elected by the members of the relevant region. Branch Executive Committee meetings shall be considered quorate when 10% of Branch Executive Committee members are present.

- b. Branch Regional Groups are a sub-structure of the branch meant to deal with local issues such as campaigns, individual cases, engagement with local media, etc. See Appendix 2 for requirements of Branch Regional Groups.
- c. There shall be an annual general meeting, held once per year in April and open to all members, to elect Branch Officers.
- d. The AGM shall need 20% of officers or 5% of the branch membership present to be considered quorate.
- e. An emergency branch executive committee meeting can be convened at any time, by the Chair or Vice- Chair, with a minimum of 48 hours' notice. The meeting will need to have 20% of committee members present in order to be considered quorate.
- f. Branch Officers other than the Chair or Vice-Chairs may convene an emergency branch executive committee meeting without the Chair or Vice-Chairs if need be. This meeting will need 40% of the Executive Committee members present to be quorate.

6. Branch Officers

- a. All Branch Officers (except for the Chair and Secretary if contested) shall be elected at the AGM, by a show of hands vote, for the period of one year. Any individual interested in becoming a Branch Officer needs to be proposed and seconded by branch members before a vote can take place. If an officer position becomes vacant between AGMs, any member shall be free to present him or herself as a candidate for the vacancy, however only Branch Executive Committee members will vote in the election. The term of office for this position shall be temporary- until the next AGM.
- b. For contested positions candidates will be invited to make a brief speech to the members on their candidacy. If a position is uncontested, the position will still need to be voted on in a "yes or no" manner. An uncontested candidate for an officer or representative position must receive a majority of "yes" votes in order to be confirmed.
- c. As the positions of Chair, Secretary and BAME officer are ex-officio members of the IWGB National Executive Committee, if these are contested, there will need to be a postal ballot in order to comply with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992. If the positions are uncontested then the elections will be run in the same way as those for other Branch Officers.
- d. The following officer positions and their respective duties are listed below:
 - i. Chair- This person will be the branch spokesperson and representative both within the IWGB and with the public at large. This individual will chair Branch Executive Committee meetings as well as the AGM and will be expected to carry out branch business on a day-to-day basis. This person shall have the authority to convene branch meetings. This person will be a member of the IWGB National Executive Committee.
 - ii. Vice-Chair for England and Wales - This person will assist the chair in their duties in England and Wales. In the Chair's absence, this person will share

the Chair's role with their fellow Vice-Chair (except for attending IWGB Executive Committee meetings). This person shall have the authority to convene branch meetings.

- iii. Vice-Chair for Scotland and Northern Ireland - This person will assist the chair in their duties in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In the Chair's absence, this person will share the Chair's role with their fellow Vice-Chair (except for attending IWGB Executive Committee meetings).. This person shall have the authority to convene branch meetings.
- iv. Secretary- This person will be in charge of producing minutes from Executive Committee meetings and the AGM, and will be responsible for the general administration of the branch. This person will be a member of the IWGB National Executive Committee.
- v. Assistant Secretary- This person shall assist the Secretary in their duties and assume their role in their absence (except for attending the IWGB Executive Committee).
- vi. Treasurer- This person will keep records of the branch's income and expenditure, will help set up and have access to the branch bank account, produce regular reports for the members on the accounts, and facilitate the execution of financial decisions taken in Branch Executive Committee meetings.
- vii. Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Officer - This person will be first point of contact and lead on issues at branch level relating specifically to Black, Asian and minority ethnic members, to participate in branch-level running of the union, and to actively engage with and support the national BAME Officer on union-wide issues, projects and campaigns relating to these areas.
- viii. Women's Officer - This person will be a point of contact for women members and will coordinate with the IWGB Women's Officer. They will campaign for and assist women members.
- ix. Communications Officer - This person will be responsible for leading on the social media and communications strategy for the branch and will be a point of contact with the Central Union Communications Department.
- x. Casework Officer- this person will coordinate branch case work and be a point of contact for the IWGB Legal Department.

7. Branch Autonomy

- a. The branch recognises that it is part of a larger union and that all actions and policies should be mindful of this. The branch shall not undertake any policies which bring disrepute to the IWGB nor which contravene the IWGB rules.
- b. Considering the above, the branch shall have complete autonomy within the IWGB in the following areas:
 - i. Ability to appoint officers in between annual elections;
 - ii. Ability to spend money devolved to the branch, at rates set by the IWGB Executive Committee;

- iii. Ability to decide its own policy, in accordance with the objects of the IWGB;
- iv. The branch shall elect its own negotiating committee for the purposes of collective bargaining;
- v. Social media- the branch shall have the ability to create its own website, Facebook page, and Twitter account to promote the objects and aims of the branch. Someone from the IWGB Communications Department shall be an admin as well.
- vi. Ability to authorize, by majority vote at a quorate Branch Executive Committee meeting or at the AGM, the formation of Regional Groups, subject to conditions in para. 2 of Appendix 2 being met.

8. Motions, Policy, and Altering the Branch Constitutions

- a. Motions or branch policy must be proposed and seconded by branch members at a quorate Branch Executive Committee meeting or AGM. With the exception of alterations to the branch constitution, policy and motions may be passed by a simple majority in a show of hands vote.
- b. The branch constitution may be altered at any time in a quorate Branch Executive Committee meeting or AGM, with a two thirds majority vote.

APPENDIX 1: BRANCH OFFICER ELECTIONS AND THE COMING INTO FORCE OF THIS CONSTITUTION

1. This Branch Constitution shall come into effect when the following occur:
 - a. It is ratified by a vote of a simple majority at the interim AGM in November, 2019. Attendance will be possible electronically and physically. The event will be heavily advertised but there will be no quorum provision;
 - b. It is ratified by a vote of a simple majority of the Scotland and Northern Ireland Foster Care Workers Branch;
 - c. It is ratified by a vote of a simple majority by the Central Union Subcommittee.
2. In order to ensure a more representative Branch Executive Committee, the following positions should be elected solely from the England and Wales membership until the time of the April, 2020 AGM. Elections should occur at the interim AGM in November, 2020, and any vacancies in these positions which arise before the April, 2020 AGM should be filled only by England and Wales members:
 - a. Vice Chair England and Wales;
 - b. Assistant Secretary;
 - c. Communications Officer;
 - d. Casework Officer.
3. From the April, 2020 AGM onwards, any officer positions (except the Vice Chairs which are region-specific) can be filled by members from any area of the country.
4. From the coming into force of this constitution, the current position of Vice Chair of the Scotland and Northern Ireland Branch will become the position of Vice Chair (Scotland and Northern Ireland) of the new UK branch.

5. Save for the exceptions expressly mentioned above, the new UK branch will adopt the existing rules and policies of the Scotland and Northern Ireland branch. Any pre-existing rules, constitution, motions, etc. of the England and Wales branch will be replaced in their entirety.

APPENDIX 2: REGIONAL GROUPS

1. Regional Groups are organised bodies of members sharing a common geographic region. The purpose of creating and distinguishing Regional Groups within the branch is to promote autonomous activity on the community level. Regional Groups will have the autonomy to run their own campaigns and assist in case work support for individual members of the group.
2. Regional Groups can be set up when the following conditions have been met:
 - a. There is a defined geographical area for the group;
 - b. There are a minimum of 10 members of the group;
 - c. The formation of the group has been approved by the Branch Executive Committee;
 - d. Having elected a Group Coordinator as a requirement of the group to exist (although not a requirement to form a group each group should aim to elect an Assistant Coordinator and Secretary as soon as possible).
3. The Regional Groups shall hold monthly meetings which are open to all members of the Group. All members should have equal voice and vote in these meetings.
4. Regional Groups shall be run by the Group Coordinators, with the assistance of the Assistant Coordinators. Group Secretaries shall be responsible for the general administration of the groups.
5. Regional Group Coordinators shall be ex-officio members of the Branch Executive Committee.