

Future Leaders

Six months of space, frameworks and community to help union officers lead more effectively.

Building tomorrow's unions
UNIONS21.ORG

FUTURE LEADERS - THE PROGRAMME

"There were lots of things I didn't know I didn't know. To step back, look at it all and think 'this is how I can make a difference'. That learning process has been fantastic."

Jamie Pullman, Musicians' Union

What Future Leaders is for

Union officers carry significant responsibility: managing teams, navigating change, making decisions that affect members' working lives. Not everyone does it with a sustained investment in how they lead.

Future Leaders exists to change that. It's a six-month programme that gives union officers the space, the frameworks and the community to lead more effectively. Not theory, but tools ready for the work they're already doing.

It's a sustained space to think about how you're leading, and whether the way you're leading is the way you want to lead.

"I wasn't sure I was going to fit in. It's given me confidence in my own skills and ability."

Jon Ryan, CSP



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OUTCOMES

What you'll come away with

By the end of the programme, participants are able to:

- ▶ Think strategically about their union's direction, and make the case for it.
- ▶ Plan and resource their work in a way that reflects what the union is actually trying to achieve.
- ▶ Lead through change, not just manage around it.
- ▶ Handle complex, high-pressure situations with greater confidence and clarity.
- ▶ Understand how AI is changing union work, and how to use it.

"I now have a whole range of toolkits and ways of reflecting on where I can affect change and how I can influence it."

Natasha Nicholson, NAHT

"I've already started adding it into my day-to-day role at work, and hope to get colleagues on board as well."

Lucy Emmerson, BALPA

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THE COHORT

The cohort experience

Future Leaders is not a course you attend alone. Participants come from unions across the UK and Ireland: different sectors, different sizes, different challenges.

The peer community is one of the things participants consistently name as most valuable.



"Meeting my comrades from across the union movement, and understanding that we're all dealing with exactly the same problems and challenges."

Matt Wanstall, NAHT

"One of the best things has been the peers we're doing this with, the conversations we're having and the networks we're building."

Adrian Prandle, FDA

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THE CURRICULUM

Four modules across a year

In-person days in Leuven, London and Dublin, with online sessions in between. Participants also choose between two AI tracks based on their existing experience.

1	IN PERSON - 4-6 NOV 2026 - LEUVEN Strategy, planning & culture • What should unions be worried about? The external environment and labour markets. • Strategic Choice Theory: what it is and how to apply it to union work. • Power, influence and building union capacity. • Vision, purpose and mission, and planning for delivery. • What is culture in a union, and how does it shape everything else? Includes external speakers and a group tutorial with individual assessment.		
2	ONLINE - DEC 2026 - JAN 2027 Structure • Union governance: what it is, why it matters, and working effectively with executives. (3 Dec 2026, 1.5 hrs) • Understanding your data and technology: data confidence, technology development and practical assessment. (7 Jan 2027, 1.5 hrs)		
AI	ONLINE - FEB 2027 - CHOOSE YOUR TRACK AI strand <table><tr><td>AI Fundamentals What AI is and why it matters. Using generative AI to support union work, responsibly and ethically. (2 x 1.5 hrs with activities in between.)</td><td>AI Fluency Streamline your work, apply AI appropriately and build systematic approaches. Evaluate outputs and navigate changing workplace dynamics.</td></tr></table>	AI Fundamentals What AI is and why it matters. Using generative AI to support union work, responsibly and ethically. (2 x 1.5 hrs with activities in between.)	AI Fluency Streamline your work, apply AI appropriately and build systematic approaches. Evaluate outputs and navigate changing workplace dynamics.
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THE CURRICULUM - CONTINUED

3	IN PERSON - MAR 2027 - DUBLIN (11-12) OR LONDON (18-19) Simulation Drawing together the learning from every previous module, participants run a fictitious union for 24 hours, facing real scenarios, real challenges and real consequences. This is where the frameworks meet the pressure.
4	IN PERSON - 26-27 MAY 2027 - LEUVEN Staffing • What is management for unions, and what is its place? • HR within unions. • Fundamentals of change management. • Dealing with difficult scenarios and conversations.
5	OPTIONAL - DETAILS TO BE CONFIRMED Data Participants who wish to extend their learning have the option of a further module. Speak to us about what this covers.

Where you'll go

In-person modules take place in **Leuven, Belgium**, with the simulation running in **Dublin or London**. Online sessions and the AI strand sit between them across the six months.

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COST & HOW TO APPLY

Join the 2026-27 cohort

This programme is open to all aspects of unions across the UK and Ireland.

UNIONS 21 SUPPORTERS

£1,450
€1,700
1,550 CHF

NON-SUPPORTER UNIONS

£2,600
€3,000
2,900 CHF

COHORT BEGINS

November 2026

APPLICATIONS OPEN

July 2026

Apply or find out more
Contact Becky Wright at Unions 21

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