

NATIONAL ACTION WEEK

A springboard into action

In workplaces, on the streets, even at a Kaiser Chiefs concert, Community's activists nationwide were out and about signing up new members during National Action Week.

This year's National Action Week, when our members all over the country try to interest others in joining Community, was a great success. During the first week in September there were events in all the regions and new members signing up created the highest monthly increase in membership of the year.

'The regions put a real effort into organising special activities, and many members encouraged their friends and neighbours to join,' said Community General Secretary Michael Leahy, 'and our Membership Service Centre was kept busy handling more than 200 calls and emails during the week, helping potential members join over the phone or online. Importantly, we also raised our union's profile nationally and within workplaces due to site visits and events.'

There were other benefits, too. In some areas, potential reps and activists have been identified and will be encouraged to become leaders within our union. Many have already asked for training. Workplace reps and union officers gained a fresh vision of what can be achieved with a concerted effort. And, in local communities, Community became much more visible to local people than perhaps it had been before.

'We need to use the action week as a springboard to generate further activities in our workplaces and local communities,' said Director of Organising Kevin Pass. 'We learned lots of valuable lessons about what worked and what didn't, and we can use this experience in future action weeks.'

Community's Executive Council has accepted recommendations from the National Action Week organising team that the week be repeated in May 2009. Each region will be able to choose their own week during May, which will make it easier for national officials to get around the country.



Community members speak to the Community at the Rotherham show (top and middle), Community took our message to the streets (bottom)

Action around the regions

Scotland, North East England and Northern Ireland (Regions 1 and 2)

- Training sessions for activists before the week began.
- Stalls in High Streets and shopping areas to raise awareness.
- Betting shops survey undertaken, with 100 responses from staff.
- Works visits, including visits by General Secretary Michael Leahy to steel sites.
- Social events, including a fundraiser for a local football club.
- In Scotland, involvement of Scottish Labour Party leadership.
- A recruitment drive at Border Biscuits in Lanark, at betting shops and in Teeside steel plants.

Yorkshire and Humberside, North West England and North Wales (Regions 3 and 7)

- Sponsorship of the Love Music, Hate Racism show which featured the Kaiser Chiefs, other bands and a crowd of nearly 5000 at the Magna Centre, Rotherham.
- Stalls in works' canteens.
- Special drives on contractors' mess rooms.
- Displays and stands in traditional works like those in Rotherham and Scunthorpe.
- Workplace tours by safety reps who met with employees.
- Visits to NSPCC offices in Manchester and Oldham
- Displays in indoor markets and High Streets, and works' shopfloors.
- NLBD team work to recruit charity workers.
- A tent at the Diversity Festival in Rotherham.

South Wales, West Midlands, South West England (Regions 4 and 5)

- Extensive tour of workplaces, some with Community President Keren Bender and General Secretary Michael Leahy.
- Drop-in 'surgeries' in offices and plants where individuals could talk about issues.
- Work in betting shops particularly in the Swansea area.
- Street stalls and stalls in plants.
- Team's success in consolidating membership in Orb Works and other plants.
- Talking to groups of NSPCC workers in the two divisions.
- Canteen displays and discussions.

East Midlands, London and South East England (Regions 6 and 8)

- Training for reps to enhance skills and map non-members in each workplace.
- Leafleting at office and plant gates before meetings.
- Personal visits to betting shops.
- Drop-in service at Corby Volunteer Bureau.
- Worksite visits and visits to contractors.
- Special leaflets directed at agency workers.
- Press advertising.

A rep-utation for making a difference

One of the results of the National Action Week has been an increase in the number of members willing to become reps - workplace, health and safety, or union learning reps.

One of the new volunteers is Dave Ryan who works on the NSPCC Helpline in Salford, Manchester. 'I've been a member of Community for about three years and believe that people in organisations like mine really should join a union for the benefits and protection that gives.

'Community is doing some great work and when I was asked if I would become a workplace rep, I said "Yes". I'm very excited by the prospect. I hope I can make a difference to members' lives.'

Armed robbery made me join

One new member recruited during the Action Week was Stella Omisol (not her real name) who works in a betting shop. Why did she join? 'Well I had experienced a terrible armed robbery in the betting shop where I worked, and no one in management came near. You're on your own in this job.

'I felt I needed a safety net, some protection from someone I could trust and I realised that could be Community. Our employers may think of us just as numbers, but not the union. I am so glad to be a member.'

A Union for you...

...a Union for life

NATIONAL ACTION WEEK September 1-7

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