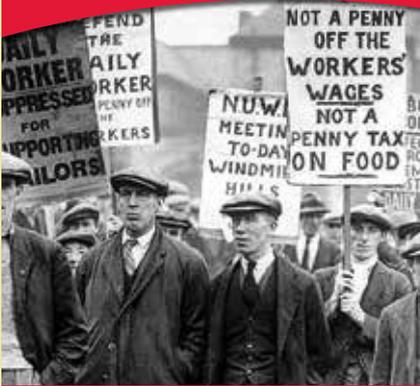


**9 DAYS IN MAY – 100 YEARS
SINCE THE GENERAL STRIKE**



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EDITOR'S NOTES

"BFAWU will continue to demand transparency, accountability and meaningful consultation and to organise wherever jobs, pay and conditions are put at risk."

sarah.woolley@bfawu.org

Organising for our future

FOOD WORKERS ARE LIVING through a period of huge uncertainty but also real opportunity. Across our workplaces, our communities and our union, the choices we make now will shape what comes next.

One of the most urgent issues facing working-class communities is food insecurity. That's why the Right to Food UK Commission matters so much. No one who grows, makes, packs, transports or sells food should struggle to afford it. A legally-enforceable right to food would be transformational not just for those experiencing hunger, but for food workers whose pay, conditions and job security are squeezed throughout the supply chain. As a union rooted in food, BFAWU will continue to push for a system that puts people before profit.

To do that effectively, we need strong organisation and that starts with *information*. Up-to-date membership details are not a bureaucratic exercise – they are essential to defending workers. Whether it's balloting, bargaining, representation or campaigning, accurate information allows your union to move quickly and collectively. Reps and members keeping their details current is one of the simplest but most powerful ways to strengthen our hand.

Over the course of 2026, we will also be undertaking a member-led review of the union. This is about asking honest questions: what is working, what isn't, and what kind of union we need to be for the next generation of food workers. This review will only be meaningful if members engage with it responding to surveys, attending meetings, sharing ideas and challenging us to do better. The future of BFAWU must be shaped by the people who *are* the union.

At the same time, many members are facing anxiety about their jobs. The ongoing uncertainty around the proposed merger between Hovis and Allied Bakeries is a reminder of how little control workers are often given over decisions that affect their livelihoods. BFAWU will continue to demand transparency, accountability and meaningful consultation and to organise wherever jobs, pay and conditions are put at risk.

There are some positive developments. New rights under the **Employment Rights Act** offer additional protections for workers, but rights on paper are never enough. They must be enforced, defended and built upon through collective organisation. At the same time, we are seeing worrying attacks on the right to protest, a right that trade unions have relied on for generations to win every gain we now take for granted. When the right to protest is weakened, so is the power of working people.

That is why our involvement with **the Together Alliance** is so important. As a diverse union, representing workers of different backgrounds, identities and experiences, we know that division only serves those who benefit from exploitation. We are all people. We all have rights. And the only way we improve our lot is by standing together organising in our workplaces, supporting one another, and fighting collectively for dignity, fairness and justice.

The challenges are real. But so is our power if we choose to use it.

In Solidarity Always

Sarah



NATIONAL PRESIDENT IAN HODSON

**“Rights don’t enforce themselves.
Processes don’t work on their own.**

...and politics doesn’t change unless working people organise to change it”

From the shop floor, not the statistics

I’VE LOST COUNT of how many times working people have been told things are improving, while their own lives tell them the opposite.

We’re shown figures about growth and productivity. We’re told the economy is 'on the up'. Yet food workers are still dealing with rising bills, insecure hours, understaffed workplaces, and employers who too often treat dignity and safety as optional.

That gap between what we’re told and what we experience isn’t accidental. It exists because the economy is usually talked about in ways that hide who benefits and who doesn’t.

What the McDonald’s case shows

Over a long period, workers in the fast-food sector raised serious concerns about harassment, safety and treatment at work. Those concerns were minimised, delayed or ignored.

What changed wasn’t *attitude*.

What changed was *organisation*. Through coalition pressure, those issues were taken to the OECD National Contact Point and forced into the open at McDonald’s.



It was not quick and it was not easy but it *mattered*, because it meant a global employer could no longer brush aside serious allegations as isolated or unsubstantiated. As a result of that process, the UK government has now offered to mediate *directly with BFAWU*.

That is an important step. But it is also important to be clear about what it means.

Mediation is *voluntary*. McDonald’s can choose to engage or it can refuse. If it refuses, the issues do not disappear. The process continues, and further investigation and public findings remain possible.

Having recognised the seriousness of the concerns and offered mediation, the government now carries responsibility for what happens next.

If a multinational employer refuses to engage constructively, then the government must ensure that refusal is transparent and that failures are exposed, not quietly buried.

Accountability cannot be optional.

Every real gain working people have ever made came from organisation, workers talking to each other, acting together, and forcing institutions to respond

Why this moment matters

This case matters not just because of one employer, but because of the political moment we are in.

We are living through a period where trust in politics is collapsing, living standards are under sustained pressure, and many working people feel abandoned by institutions that once claimed to represent them.

That creates *danger*.

Reform UK feeds off that anger, offering easy answers and convenient scapegoats while recycling the same economic ideas that caused the damage in the first place. They talk like insurgents, but their politics would weaken unions, strip away protections and leave working people even more exposed.



At the same time, *the Labour Party* has drifted rightwards retreating from earlier commitments, talking tough on protest and migration, and showing an increasingly authoritarian instinct when it comes to dissent and workers’ power. That doesn’t rebuild trust. It deepens cynicism.

The Conservatives, meanwhile, offer nothing but the politics of decline. After years of failure, privatisation and hollowing-out, they have no credible answers left – only the wreckage of the country they helped create.

Where hope exists – and here it is struggling to be born

There *are* alternatives.

The Greens continue to offer a vision rooted in social justice, public investment and dignity at work ideas that resonate with many trade unionists and working people looking for something genuinely different. At the same time, new political projects have emerged claiming to speak for working people outside the existing parties.

The ambition is understandable *but ambition alone is not enough.*



When new movements become dominated by personalities, internal manoeuvring and individual egos, they risk losing the very people they claim to represent before they've even found their feet. Movements rooted in workers' lives need collective leadership, humility and discipline not personal projects.

History shows that working-class politics only succeeds when it is built *with* working people, not over their heads.

Why organisation still matters more than ever

In this environment, it's tempting to look for saviours a new party, a new leader, a new slogan.

Trade unionists know better.

Every real gain working people have ever made came from *organisation*, workers talking to each other, acting together, and forcing institutions to respond.

The McDonald's case shows that clearly. It wasn't goodwill that moved things forward:

- It was *pressure*.
- It was *persistence*.
- It was *collective power*.

Rights don't enforce themselves.

Processes don't work on their own.

...And politics doesn't change *unless working people organise to change it.*

Keeping our focus where it belongs

Food workers face real pressures, and it's no surprise that anger is growing.

Our task as a union is not to lecture, but to organise to turn frustration into power rather than division.

Whether mediation goes ahead or not, the lesson remains the same, workers organised to force action, and workers will need to keep that pressure on to ensure this process delivers real change.

That's not *ideology*.

That's *experience*.

...And in a political landscape full of false promises and recycled failures, it remains the only reliable route to dignity, safety and justice at work.

Solidarity

Ian

INVITING YOUNG MEMBERS TO THE TOLPUDDLE FESTIVAL



BFAWU IS INVITING Young Members to attend the Tolpuddle Festival this year – with subsidised travel expenses and complimentary tickets to events and exhibitions.

This festival is very informative about the roots of our movement as well as being a lot of fun! Scan the QR code to register your interest.

UPDATE FROM BFAWU LEARN

LEARNING IS SOMETHING WE ALL DO EVERY SINGLE DAY.

Whether it's picking up a new skill at work, understanding a colleague a bit better, or learning why something didn't quite go to plan, *learning isn't confined to classrooms or textbooks*. It's part of our working lives, our organising, and our solidarity with one another.

Too often, learning is made to feel intimidating, like it's about getting things 'wrong' or being judged. In reality, learning is about curiosity, confidence and collective support. It's about creating spaces where people feel comfortable asking questions, sharing knowledge, and saying "I didn't know that" without fear or embarrassment.

That's why we're looking at practical, member-led ways to support learning across the union. One idea we're keen to develop is a **dialect cheat sheet** a simple, accessible guide to local words and phrases people use every day.



Scan to contribute to:

**The
BFAWU
Local Dialect
Cheat sheet**

Accents, slang and regional terms are part of who we are, but they can sometimes be barriers to understanding. By sharing what our words mean, we can help each other communicate better and feel more included.

We're also exploring the idea of launching an **online book club** a relaxed space to meet, read and chat. No exams, no pressure, just shared discussion, new ideas, and connection across workplaces and regions.

These are just starting points. We know learning works best when it's shaped by the people taking part, so we're open to ideas whether that's short skill-shares, peer learning sessions, creative workshops, or something completely different, contact us at Learn@bfawu.org.

Learning is power. And when we learn together, we make the whole union stronger.



**BFAWU
LEARN**

Learning with the
Bakers Food and
Allied Workers Union



If you've got an idea, a skill to share, or want to help others learn we'd love to hear from you.

GOODBYE LAURA GRAHAM

FOR THOSE OF YOU that haven't heard, **Laura Graham**, Regional Officer of our Number 7 Region, who has in the last few years also supported Region 4, left the BFAWU at the end of January to take up a new role.

We hope you will join us in wishing her all the best in her new adventure, a huge change after being an active part of our union for many years

She is staying as a BFAWU member though *which is great!*

Sarah

Laura as we'll always remember her! →



BFAWU KEY DATES 2026

Regional Meetings

Region 1

January	Tuesday 13th	Health, Safety & Environment Conference TBC	To be held at: The Marx Memorial Library, Clerkenwell Green, EC1R 0DU 11.30 start
April	Tuesday 14th		
July	Tuesday 14th	Shop Stewards Conference TBC	
October	Tuesday 13th	TBC	

Region 2

January	Tuesday 20th	Health, Safety & Environment Conference TBC	To be held at: The Business Centre, Cardiff House, Barry, CF63 2AW 11.00 start
April	Wednesday 15th		
July	Tuesday 14th	Shop Stewards Conference TBC	
October	Wednesday 14th	TBC	

Region 3

January	Tuesday 13th	Health, Safety & Environment Conference TBC	To be held at: Polish Millenium House, Birmingham, B5 5PH 10.30 start
April	Tuesday 14th		
July	Tuesday 14th	Shop Stewards Conference TBC	
October	Tuesday 13th	TBC	

Region 4

January	Thursday 15th	Health, Safety & Environment Conference TBC	To be held at: Sunshine House, Wigan, WN1 3SA 10.30 start
April	Thursday 16th		
July	Thursday 16th	Shop Stewards Conference TBC	
October	Thursday 15th	TBC	

Region 5

January	Wednesday 14th *	Health, Safety & Environment Conference Wednesday 18th February	To be held at: Morton Park Premier Inn, Darlington, DL1 4PJ or * ONLINE 10.30 start
April	Wednesday 15th		
July	Wednesday 15th	Shop Stewards Conference Wednesday 18th February	
October	Wednesday 14th *	TBC	

Region 7

January	Friday 9th	Health, Safety & Environment Conference TBC	To be held at: ICTU Building or * ONLINE 10.30 start
April	Friday 10th		
July	Friday 10th *	Shop Stewards Conference TBC	
October	Friday 9th	TBC	

Region 6 (Branches 600 & 601)

January	TBC *	Health, Safety & Environment Conference TBC	To be held at: All * ONLINE TBC start
April	TBC *		
July	TBC *	Shop Stewards Conference TBC	
October	TBC *	TBC	

BFAWU KEY DATES 2026

Annual Conference

When	Sunday 7th JUNE to Wednesday 10th JUNE – travel Saturday the 6 th and Thursday the 11 th June
Where	Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Yarnfield, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 0NL

Committee Meetings

Standing Orders Committee

February	Tuesday 17th	ONLINE	April meeting physical element to be held at Region 4 [Manchester] Office – Start 11.00
April	Thursday 23rd	In person/hybrid	
May	Tuesday 12th	ONLINE	June meeting physical element to be held at Conference venue – Start 3.00pm
June	Saturday 6th	In person/hybrid	

Executive Council Committee

February	Wednesday 4th – Friday 6th	To be held at: Stanborough House [BFAWU HeadOffice] Arrival on the first day at 12.00
May	Tuesday 5th – Friday 8th	
August	Wednesday 5th – Friday 7th	
November	Wednesday 4th – Friday 6th	

National ULR Committee

January	Tuesday 27th	In person/hybrid	To be held either ONLINE or in a hybrid format with the physical element being at the Region 5 [Pudsey] Office – Start 11.00
April	Thursday 23rd	ONLINE	
July	Tuesday 12th	In person/hybrid	
October	Saturday 6th	ONLINE	

National H & S Committee

January	Monday 26th	ONLINE	To be held either ONLINE or in a hybrid format with the physical element being at the Stanborough House [BFAWU Head Office] – Start 10.30
April	Monday 27th	In person/hybrid	
July	Monday 27th	ONLINE	
October	Monday 26th	In person/hybrid	

Food Workers and Allied Trades for Unity not Division



Monthly, every 3rd Monday evening – Start 7.00pm
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/BUynbsFPSra1t4-42wacfg>

Food Workers and Allied Trades Support Palestine and other International Issues



Monthly, every 2nd Monday evening – Start 7.00pm
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Phejn8h3Q2aPjPmRYm86dA>

BFAWU KEY DATES 2026

Quarterly **ONLINE** Network Meetings

Branch Secretary Network

January	Monday 12th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/37xo6pxvShK6RCi8IMOgeQ Start 6.00pm	
April	Monday 13th		
July	Monday 13th		
October	Monday 12th		

Food Workers and Allied Trades Support Trans Rights

January	Monday 19th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/S54Ojg_oT-KLRZKs64G9QA Start 6.00pm	
April	Monday 20th		
July	Monday 20th		
October	Monday 19th		

BAME Members Network

January	Tuesday 13th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/uHO48ueBT8OFbp5NRtl48g Start 6.00pm	
April	Tuesday 14th		
July	Tuesday 14th		
October	Tuesday 13th		

Green Reps Network

January	Tuesday 13th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/7hhP_nqAQeC3KAK6B7LI9Q Start 7.00pm	
April	Tuesday 14th		
July	Tuesday 14th		
October	Tuesday 13th		

LGBTQ+ Members Network

January	Wednesday 14th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/aGQFLtDVQ-ikCTAE0BZilw Start 6.00pm	
April	Wednesday 15th		
July	Wednesday 15th		
October	Wednesday 14th		

Women Members Network

January	Wednesday 14th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/W5Qtq1i9TMy9tdkl8APaKg Start 7.00pm	
April	Wednesday 15th		
July	Wednesday 15th		
October	Wednesday 14th		

Disabled Members Network

January	Thursday 15th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/esmeSJQKQuWySRB71ic1tQ Start 6.00pm	
April	Thursday 16th		
July	Thursday 16th		
October	Thursday 15th		

BFAWU KEY DATES 2026

Quarterly **ONLINE** Network Meetings

Young Members Network

January	Thursday 15th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/3jaQu2OIRz22gilDo4SvIA Start 7.00pm	
April	Thursday 16th		
July	Thursday 16th		
October	Thursday 15th		

Retired Members Network

January	Friday 16th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/b6UxeK4XSducEetmpS4CQQ Start 5.00pm	
April	Friday 17th		
July	Friday 17th		
October	Friday 16th		

Union Learner Representatives (ULRs) Network

January	Friday 16th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/AWBZYSWzRtmJliSvGh-RQQ Start 6.00pm	
April	Friday 17th		
July	Friday 17th		
October	Friday 16th		

BFAWU Morning Star Readers Group

January	Friday 16th	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/oB9X34k-TiKno3GGJQgTQ Start 7.00pm	
April	Friday 17th		
July	Friday 17th		
October	Friday 16th		

Interested in being a BFAWU Rep?



FOODWORKER UNION
STRENGTH

COULD YOU BE A REP FOR OUR BRILLIANT UNION?

The strength of our Union lies in the quality and commitment of our people

- The rep is primarily a problem solver.
- A rep builds confidence and promotes mutual support.
- Confidence and mutual support are achieved when the rep involves other staff in the creative resolution of a member's problem or grievance.
- The rep encourages members to find solutions together by facilitating problem solving.
- The rep is also the key link between the membership and the leadership of branches.

Scan the code to get involved!

WORKPLACE WINS!

We have a number of workplace wins over the last few months – here are a few examples!

“The branch recently supported a member through a complex Drugs & Alcohol disciplinary case that involved a lengthy suspension and external testing processes.

With union representation in place, the risk to the member was significantly reduced, leading to their return to work, the lifting of the suspension, and a time-limited, low-level outcome rather than dismissal.

While the case raised serious concerns about process, early procedural challenge and scrutiny of external processes were key in preventing a far more severe outcome.

The member remains in employment, and the matter is now closed.”

“A colleague was dismissed due to attendance issues linked directly to poor mental health. With union support, an appeal was submitted challenging the dismissal as unfair, supported by properly gathered and clearly presented evidence.

The member was supported throughout the entire process, ensuring his circumstances were fully understood and taken seriously. As a result, the appeal was upheld and the member was reinstated.

This case shows the real difference that strong union representation makes when the full picture is put in front of an employer – fairness can prevail and members can get the outcome they deserve.”

To make it easier for us to capture these wins and promote them, we have put together a quick set of questions to gather information. There are separate forms for reps and members to allow for the different perspectives!

“A member approaching retirement requested flexible working to reduce his hours to part-time – a request management initially agreed to on a 'trial' basis.

However, no adjustment was made to his workload, and he was expected to complete the same volume of work in half the time, setting the arrangement up to fail. When this inevitably proved impossible, the trial was ended and he was instructed to return to full-time hours.

Working closely with the member and his family, it became clear that he had serious health conditions which should have been recognised as a disability. An appeal was submitted arguing that the flexible working request was also a request for reasonable adjustments, that the original trial was fundamentally unfair, and that the refusal was not supported by a genuine business reason.

The appeal was upheld, securing reduced hours with an appropriate workload on the member's return to work.

Sadly, the stress caused by the employer's handling of the situation has led to the member currently being off sick. What this case exposed was a shocking lack of empathy and understanding from local management, who were aware of the member's health issues yet failed to act appropriately.

This win shows why honest conversations, collective support and a strong union presence matter because members deserve to be treated with *fairness, dignity and humanity* at work.”

“After it was raised that there were no free sanitary supplies in the women's toilets, the issue was taken directly to senior management. By persisting and making the case for dignity, fairness and basic workplace provision, agreement was secured to install free dispensers in the ladies' toilets, with the employer covering the cost of ongoing refills.

A rolling contract for charge-free menstrual products has now been signed, ensuring this support is permanent rather than a one-off fix.

This win shows that when members and reps don't give up and keep pushing for what's right, real and lasting, *change can be achieved at work.*”

“Thirteen colleagues were put at risk of redundancy, but they were not left to face it alone. Working alongside our FTO and a fellow shop steward, we supported members through every stage of the process answering questions, challenging where needed, and making sure everyone knew their options.

The company offered either suitable alternative employment or redundancy pay, and every member who wanted to remain in work within the Finsbury Food Group was able to do so. Some colleagues chose to take redundancy and were satisfied with the package secured.

This is what union support looks like in practice – collective strength, real choices, and people treated with dignity.

***In our union, you are never alone there is always someone to advise, support and stand with you.*”**

Who knows, your big win could provide us with an article in Foodworker!

So, scan the code and let us know what you and your Union have done brilliantly!

Branch Workplace Wins



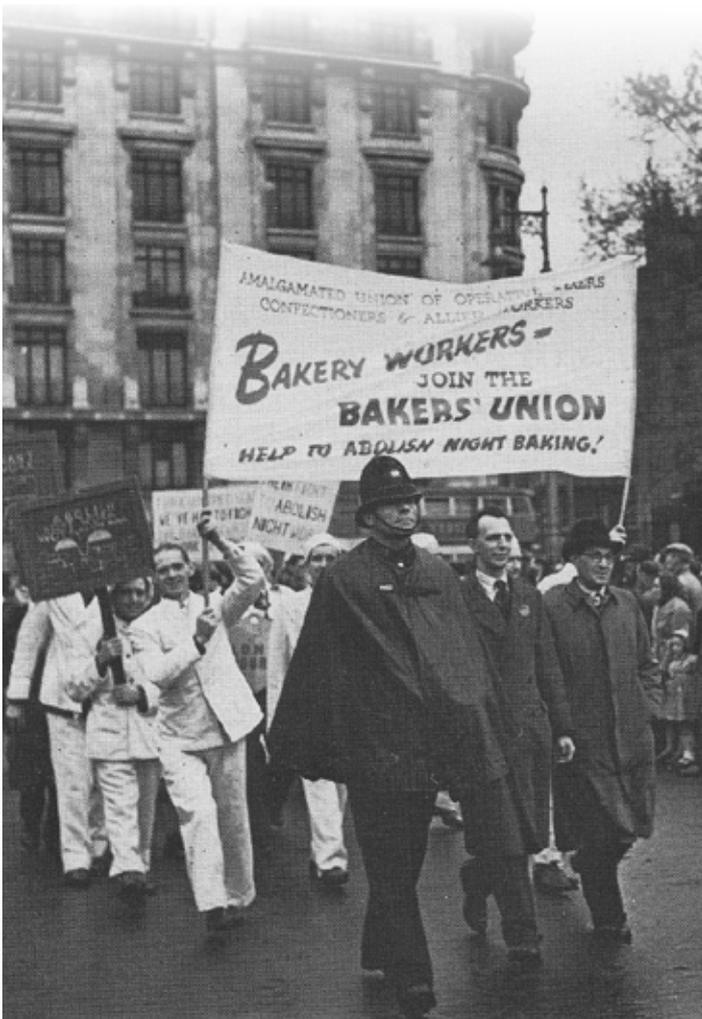
BAKERS, FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION

A DETAILED HISTORICAL ACCOUNT (1847–2025)

IAN HODSON
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
2010 – TODAY

THIS DOCUMENT ATTEMPTS to provide a contextual history of the **Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)**, tracing its development from a small group of Manchester operative bakers in 1847 to a modern, independent, organising union.

It is designed to help readers understand not only what the union did, but why it did it, and how those actions shaped the wider labour movement, public health, and political representation in Britain.



Bakery workers protesting in 1948

1 Social and Industrial Background to 1847

By the 1840s, Britain's cities were rapidly industrialising. Bakers worked mostly in small workplaces, often basements or cellars. There was no national regulation of hours. A typical baker in Manchester might start work at 10 or 11 p.m., work through the night preparing dough, and continue into the next day selling or delivering bread. Weeks of 80–90 hours were common. Early death from exhaustion, arthritis, respiratory disease and deformity of the spine was widely reported in Factory Inspector reports. This environment produced the **Manchester Friendly Association of Operative Bakers** in 1847.

2 Founding Phase (1847–1863): Manchester Friendly Association of Operative Bakers

The earliest rules (as reported in later union histories and trades council records) show three constant demands:

- Limitation of working hours to something approaching 12 in 24.
- Prohibition or limitation of Sunday labour, which was seen as both a health and moral question.
- Clean, ventilated bakehouses to protect both workers and the public.

The Association was part 'friendly society' (*sick pay, burial benefit*) and part trade union. This dual structure was typical of mid-19th-century unions because workers lacked any state safety net. If a baker was crippled by 32, the union was his *only* support.

Between 1847 and 1863, the Manchester Bakers allied themselves with local trades councils and public health reformers. This alliance was crucial, it meant that when medical officers of health and city councillors wanted to regulate dirty, overcrowded bakehouses, the bakers were there to say, "Yes, *and protect the workers too.*" That is why the **Bakehouse Act 1863** reflected both public hygiene *and* labour concerns.

3 Early Law-Making and the Bakehouse Acts (1863, 1883, 1903)

- **1863 Bakehouse Act** – applied mainly to urban areas, required lime-washing, basic cleanliness, and banned sleeping in bakehouses. The union had highlighted the practice of exhausted bakers sleeping beside hot ovens, breathing flour dust.
- **1883 Bakehouse Act** – extended protections, particularly for young persons and for ventilation; this followed continued agitation by the Operative Bakers and the growing TUC.
- **1903 provisions** – reinforced inspection powers. By this point, local inspectors in London and Manchester were explicitly referencing union complaints in their annual reports.

Without a union pushing, many of these provisions would have remained recommendations. The bakers supplied the lived evidence, names of workshops, hours worked, and examples of illness. That evidence is what gave reformers leverage in Parliament.

4 Participation in the First Trades Union Congress (1868)

The first TUC in 1868 at the Mechanics' Institute, Manchester, was called by the Manchester and Salford Trades Council to bind together local and craft societies. The Operative Bakers were among those present.

Their presence matters because it shows that, unlike some craft bodies, they saw their struggle as national, not local. From 1868 onwards they were able to put 'night baking' and 'hours of labour' on the national union agenda year after year.

5. Jewish, Migrant and Women Bakers (1880s–1914)

Late-19th-century immigration, especially Jewish immigration from the Russian Empire, transformed parts of the baking trade. Employers sometimes used immigrant bakers to undercut union rates. Some unions responded with *exclusion*.

The Operative Bakers moved in the opposite direction. They cooperated with the Hebrew Bakers' Union in London, held joint meetings in Manchester, and recruited Yiddish-speaking members. This mattered because it prevented the employer tactic of '*divide by nationality*' and it laid down an anti-racist, internationalist instinct that survives in the BFAWU today.



Women entered industrialised food production in large numbers around the turn of the century. Because the bakers were already expanding beyond small craft shops into confectionery and biscuit factories, they were among the earlier unions to offer women **full membership** rather than auxiliary status.

This was far ahead of many craft and building unions of the same period.

6 Keir Hardie and Political Unionism (1890s–1900s)

Contemporary labour papers record **Keir Hardie** addressing meetings of operative bakers in the 1890s in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Hardie's message was that industrial power must be matched with political power: workers needed MPs of their own. The bakers were receptive because they had already spent 30 years trying to get Parliament to regulate bakehouses. Thus, when the **Labour Representation Committee (LRC)** was formed in 1900, the bakers affiliated. They were not the largest union, but they were one of the most consistent in pushing health, safety and hours into the Labour programme.

7 The Union in Wartime (1914–1918)

Bread was essential to morale and nutrition, bakery work was therefore treated as a *protected occupation*. The union negotiated *war bonuses* to offset inflation, and it argued successfully that women who replaced enlisted men should be paid on the same scale. It also gave evidence to the **Health of Munition Workers Committee** (1917) on *fatigue*, which fed into post-war factory legislation.

8 The Union in Wartime (1939–1945)

Under the **Ministry of Food**, the union sat on joint consultative bodies to coordinate production. It protected minimum rates under the *Essential Work Orders*, pressed for safe conditions during blackouts, and accepted the *National Loaf* as a wartime necessity. This dual role – patriotic production plus defence of standards is why the union emerged from the war with enhanced status in national bargaining.

9 Post-War Consolidation and Renaming (1945–1964)

With national bargaining established, the union was able to secure the **40-hour week**, **paid annual holidays**, and **better overtime arrangements**. As food manufacturing expanded, it made sense to adopt the inclusive title '*Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)*' in 1964. This marked the shift from a single-trade craft body to a wider industrial union in the food sector.

10 The Bread Strikes of the 1970s

In the 1970s, rising prices and attempts by employers to hold down wages triggered national bakery disputes. BFAWU members at *Hovis*, *Mothers Pride*, *Allied* and other firms took strike action (notably 1974 and again later in the decade). These actions won improved basic rates and better shift premiums, and, importantly, demonstrated that the union could still deliver in a period of high inflation. The settlements became benchmarks for other food workers.

11 Health and Safety Era (1974–1990s)

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 created a framework, but unions had to make it *real*. The BFAWU was among the first to appoint and train safety reps under the **1977 Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations**.

Reps used those powers to challenge *unsafe tunnel ovens*, *excessive heat*, *flour-dust exposure* and *poor manual-handling practice* – the very problems that had crippled bakers in their early 30s a century before. This continuity – fighting the same underlying risks – shows how deeply health and safety is rooted in the union's identity.

12 Hovis, Agency Labour and Zero-Hours (Wigan, 2013)

When *Hovis* in Wigan began using agency labour on insecure contracts, BFAWU members voted for strike action. The union framed the issue not only as pay but as *fairness*: permanent staff should not be replaced by low-paid, no-guarantee agency workers. After sustained action and public support, the company agreed to offer permanent contracts to agency staff. This was one of the first high-profile defeats of zero-hours style employment in the food sector and is still cited in union education.

13 McStrike, Migrant Organising and International Links (2010s)

In 2017, the union supported workers at McDonald’s in taking the first ever UK strike in the fast-food giant. Demands included £10 per hour (now £15 in later campaigns), *union recognition*, and *an end to bullying*. The action gained national media attention and connected the BFAWU to an international network of fast-food workers through the IUF. For a union founded in 1847 in small bakeries to be leading 21st-century precarious-work struggles shows how adaptable its organising tradition is.

14 Political Intervention: Supporting Jeremy Corbyn and Disaffiliation (2015–2021)

The BFAWU was one of the earliest unions to endorse **Jeremy Corbyn** for Labour leader in 2015. It did so because Corbyn’s platform public ownership, strengthened union rights, £10+ minimum wage aligned with long-standing BFAWU policy. Members campaigned, spoke at rallies and helped normalise the idea that low-paid food workers should not only be ‘key workers’ but should have pay to match. However, when the Labour Party leadership later moved away from those positions and disciplinary actions were taken against some trade-union figures, the union reviewed its affiliation. In 2021, it voted to disaffiliate from Labour, asserting its independence and restating that its loyalty is *to its members first*.

15 COVID-19: Essential but Exposed (2020–2022)

Food workers could not work from home. The union immediately demanded PPE, distancing, enhanced cleaning, and paid isolation. It challenged Statutory Sick Pay levels, arguing that workers on £95.85 per week would be forced to attend work even when infectious. BFAWU reps used Health & Safety law to halt unsafe lines and negotiated site-by-site protections. The union also secured furlough top-ups and defended members in supply chains to hospitality.

In public, the union insisted that if workers are essential, then their rights, pay and protection must also be essential.

16 Measuring the Union’s Impact

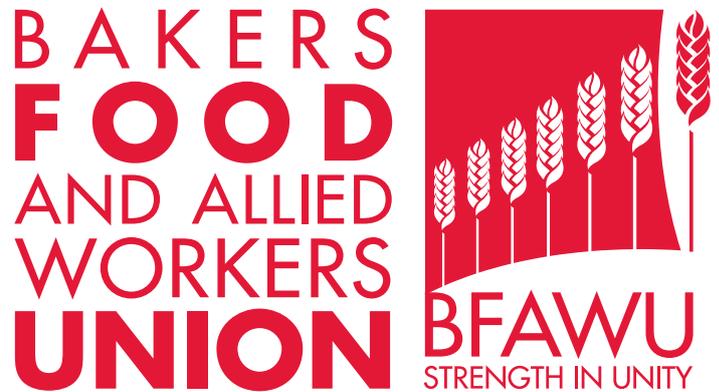
It is possible to trace direct lines from union action to improved life outcomes for workers:

- 19th-century action **Bakehouse Acts** reduced early disablement.
- Wartime participation recognition of baking as essential post-war national bargaining.
- 1970s strikes higher food-sector wages attraction and retention of labour.
- 2013 Hovis strike permanent contracts model for anti-casualisation.
- 2020 COVID interventions – safer factories, fewer infections, maintained income.

Without the union, these changes would likely have been slower, weaker, or entirely absent.

17 Duty to Rebuild

The union’s history shows a pattern: whenever it organised widely – including migrants, women, so-called unskilled workers – it grew in strength and was able to win for everyone. Whenever workplaces became fragmented or members disengaged, employers reintroduced casualisation and unsafe practices. That is why understanding history is essential: it tells today’s members and officials that rebuilding branches, recruiting new workers and defending health and safety are not optional extras – they are how the union has always won.



Key Improvements Over Time

Issue	Before Union	After Union Wins
Working Hours	80–90 hrs/week (1840s)	40–37.5 hrs/week (post-war to 1990s)
Bakehouse Conditions	Cellars, no ventilation	Ventilation, hygiene, inspections (1863–1903)
Child/Young Workers	Boys as young as 10	Banned/restricted in bakehouses
Women’s Status	Often excluded	Full membership, bargaining voice
Casual/Agency Labour	Used to undercut	Hovis Wigan 2013: permanent posts
Political Voice	Petitioning only	LRC/early Labour participation
Crisis Protection	None	COVID: PPE, isolation pay, furlough deals



THE GENERAL STRIKE 1926

BALH
BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR LOCAL HISTORY

Making history, not reliving it – the national partnership to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the General Strike 1926

By **Henry Fowler**

Assistant General Secretary at the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU)

Originally published for *British Association of Local History* in October 2025.

NEXT YEAR IS AN important anniversary for the wider trade union and labour movement – it's 100 years since those famous 'Nine Days in May'.



National museums, libraries, archives, community groups, and individuals across the UK are marking the centenary of the 1926 General Strike.



This map brings together stories, exhibitions, and events to remember the strike and its impact on working people, as well as to highlight how these struggles connect to the present.

In partnership with the trade union and wider labour movement, our project has delivered an interactive map of sites for public visitation throughout 2026. This may include details of a specific exhibition, an educational event, or a unique collection to explore, all part of our rich history of the General Strike.

Take our pledge today to 'Visit a General Strike 100 Site' using this form. All signups will receive our our monthly **General Strike 100** email throughout the anniversary year

Sign up to visit your nearest site here:
www.bit.ly/VisitaGS100site

A short period of our history which will forever be remembered for the solidarity of the strikers.

Despite the varying political analyses of the General Strike 1926, and its outcomes for working people, a national coordination is underway to bring together as many museums, libraries, archives and local history groups as possible.

We are coming together to mark this milestone in UK history, to make history accessible to encourage the wider public to really engage with the General Strike period, an important part of our political and historical development. It comes from that all too often experience of finding ourselves in town/city even village we do not know and not knowing of the diverse radical history around us.

Even with the era of Googling local information, this can often be time-consuming, difficult and requires planning, which is not always built into our lifestyles. It is the idea of making this nationally important history *locally accessible* and *engaging* which has driven our national partnership for the celebration of the **General Strike 100** anniversary.

This new growing partnership of 16 museums, archives, libraries, and history groups has developed an **interactive, searchable map** of all those celebrating the General Strike, including important history sites from the strike itself. This includes details of *specific exhibitions*, *educational events* and *unique collections to explore*, all part of our rich history of the General Strike 1926.

This national effort is coordinated by the **GFTU** (who last year celebrated their own 125th anniversary).

Resources to help commemorate the General Strike will include a printed passport, challenging you all to visit as many of these museums, archives, libraries, and sites as possible.

What makes this project so exciting is not just the ease in which you will be able to access the history of the General Strike 1926, but the collaboration of many of our biggest trade union, labour, and people's history venues across the UK. **Uniting these organisations into one partnership allows us to promote and engage with all these wonderful sites.**

We continue to recruit to our partnership and encourage those libraries, museums, archives, and indeed history groups who want to join this partnership, everyone is welcome. Our most recent recruit was the wonderful 'Crab Museum' in Margate, which boasts a 'diorama of a model village, set in 1926 and populated by taxidermied crabs'.

It is this unique partnership – not the creation of an 'umbrella' organisation – but a platform to support and promote all the wonderful celebrations of this strike which will happen in 2026. We look forward to taking part in Bristol's *Radical History Festival* next April, discussing what the General Strike 1926 means in 2026.

This project also has been honest and clear from the outset that there will be different views, political debates, and reflections of the 1926 General Strike. Our partnership is not about presenting a particular view of history but about ensuring that people engage in this history at this special anniversary.

We are also clear that this is not about some nostalgia of a bygone era that does not relate to our struggles today – *the history of workers must be understood as a continuum that takes us up to today.*

As organisations involved continue to finalise their plans for 2026, we will be working hard to make this project a huge success, something that is accessible for future generations to look back on. Necessarily, the development costs associated with our website, project design, and initial printing expenses are substantial and that is why our launch included a clear call to help us fundraise for this project.

We have written to the wider trade union and labour movement seeking donations and have also opened this up to individuals to donate to too.

If you are interested in becoming involved or would like to support this project, please go to:

www.bit.ly/GeneralStrike100 .

Alongside our website, we have created a dedicated Facebook page and Instagram account to showcase all the things partners are doing in 2026.

We live in a period of huge crisis politically and economically, a crisis that has sharp parallels with the build-up to the General Strike.

As we look forward to celebrating 100 years of General Strike together, our motto for this partnership will be that workers continue to make the history, we are not *just reliving it.*



PRIORITY AND NON-PRIORITY DEBTS

The difference between priority and non-priority debts (and why it matters)

WITH SO MANY TYPES OF DEBT, it can be hard to know which should be paid first. Understanding the difference between *priority* and *non-priority* debts helps you budget more effectively and stay in control of your money.

What are priority debts?

Priority debts are those that must be paid to avoid serious consequences – from losing access to essential services to facing legal action.

That's why these debts are called priority debts – they should always be paid first *over other debts.*

What happens if I don't pay priority debts?

The consequences depend on the type of debt and can include:

- **Bailiff action** – for example, if you don't pay your council tax, gas and electricity bills.
- **Disconnection of utilities** – if gas or electricity bills remain unpaid.
- **Losing your home** – in the most serious cases, missed rent, mortgage or secured loan payments can result in eviction or repossession.
- **Repossession of a vehicle on finance** – if you fall into arrears.

Types of priority debts are there?

Common priority debts include:

- Mortgage or rent arrears
- Council Tax arrears
- Gas and electricity arrears
- HMRC
- TV licence fines
- Court fines or child maintenance
- Hire Purchase (HP), Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) or Lease Agreement arrears

What are non-priority debts?

Non-priority debts are still important – but the consequences of missed payments are generally less severe. They don't usually put your home or essential services at immediate risk.



What happens if I don't pay non-priority debts?

If you fall behind on these, you could face:

- **County Court Judgments (CCJs)** – creditors may take legal action to recover what you owe.
- **Debt collection** – your debt could be sold to another company that pursues repayment.
- **Damage to your credit file** – missed payments can lead to default notices and harm your credit rating.

What debts are non-priority?

Common non-priority debts include:

- Credit cards
- Personal loans
- Store cards or catalogue debts
- Overdrafts

What this means for your budget

When managing your household budget, always make sure priority debts are covered *first* – they carry the most serious consequences if left unpaid.

Once those are managed, focus on non-priority debts. Keeping up with minimum payments, where possible, can help prevent defaults while you explore longer-term solutions.

February 2026 PayPlan Blog #1

PayPlan[®]

We're here to help

If you are struggling with debts call us on 0800 072 1206. We're open from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am – 3pm on Saturdays.

Alternatively, you can visit us to speak via live chat or for more information.

www.payplan.com/bfawu

WORKERS POWER – ORGANISING TO WIN!

This course could change your life

WHY HAS THE PRICE of the food that we make in our industry gone up, but my wages have flatlined? Why is it getting harder and harder to stay afloat, when people like Elon Musk have more money than ever? Big questions like these, about economics and politics, affect us all, in our jobs, our families and our lives – but we don't talk about them enough.

Workers Power – Organising to Win! Is a trade union political education course which tells the stories you don't hear in school and which you don't see on TV. *Our stories, our history.*

We go on a journey of 150 years of working class history including the most recent decades of financial crisis, our empty pockets coming out of the supermarket, welfare slashed, foodbanks in every town, all as the billionaire class laughs all the way to the bank.

How is this happening to us? How are we working harder and getting poorer? What can we do about it? We answer these questions together. And that's where the practical skills come in like finding out what's shaped you and the people you're working with and being able to express that. How to listen deeply, how to connect with people, find out what their interests are, what makes any of us tick, and then make concrete plans to build our strength in the workplace.

The journey doesn't end when we leave the course, there are follow-up mentor sessions to see how the organising is going and troubleshoot any challenges.



Workers Power – Organising to Win!, was originally developed by the *Communication Workers of America* trade union and then adapted for the UK by experienced union organisers and economists. The model is all about raising class consciousness. What does that mean? As **Rafael Navar**, former Political Director of the CWA, one of the authors of the course explains, "If you're in a fight, but you don't know you're in a fight, then you're gonna get your ass kicked". Knowing you're in a fight and learning how to fight back, together, is key to us not getting our asses kicked. It's also about knowing where we come from in order to know where we can go.

We come from struggle, from hardship, but also solidarity, where sticking together, supporting one another, enabled us to not only survive but to *thrive*. We achieved a universal health service, social housing, access and independent living for disabled people, free education and a say in how our economy should be run. These are wins within living memory. And these are wins that we have lost, but history doesn't stay still, and we believe we can win them back.

As Greggs worker **Joanne** explains: "What's made an impression for me in this course was learning about the economic side of us. And it really stirred up a fire in me because for years the media's told us one story, and then you come to places like this and you find out the truth..and it just burns up a fire inside you that proves that what you are doing with the union is as good, right, and true".

After the course, Chef **Emiliano** told us: "This experience has changed me deeply. I walked in a room afraid of it and left energised and invigorated by it. Completely changed my confidence game, and I am in disbelief how this deeply affected me in just 3 days. Now moving to the next steps and get strategically organised for the my area!"

So far, *Workers Power* has been taught with five different unions, with the BFAWU having run it seven times. From sixteen courses in two years, participants have had 1700 organising conversations, recruited over 700 new members, launched 26 campaigns, and one in three participants have become reps.

People come together feeling a bit apprehensive, nervous, unsure of what to expect, and leave feeling more connected, confident and motivated to organise. It's also just really fun and a great way to meet your fellow members and experience something out of the ordinary. *What are you waiting for?*

Our next course is for BFAWU young members (under 35) July 27–29th at Quorn Grange, Leicester

[If you're above 35 and a rep, there is also a course for reps from throughout the movement happening March 18-20th at Wortley Hall, Barnsley]

www.c4pe.org



THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT – WHY IT FALLS SHORT

AS OF LATE 2025, the UK Government's **Employment Rights Act 2025** has become law and will begin a phased rollout of reforms throughout 2026 and beyond. The Government is positioning this as a major shift in employment protections. In reality, while some rights are extended, the changes are both partial and uneven, often leaving significant gaps and drifting far short of what workers and trade unions have been calling for.

1 Day-One Rights: *partial progress, partial problems*

From 6 April 2026, a number of workplace entitlements will shift from being conditional on length of service to being available from the first day of employment. These include:

- *Paternity leave* becoming a 'day-one right', removing the old 26-week minimum service requirement.
- *Unpaid parental leave* becoming automatic from day one.

These may look positive on the surface, but they mask limitations that still leave workers vulnerable. Statutory pay entitlements (such as *statutory paternity pay*) are not fully expanded under these changes, meaning employers can still avoid meaningful compensation while granting nominal rights. The narrow focus on formal entitlements does little to challenge low-paid, insecure work.

2 Statutory Sick Pay: *more access, still not enough*

Also from 6 April 2026, workers' access to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) improves:

- SSP will be payable from day one of sickness, not after a waiting period.
- The requirement that workers must earn above the Lower Earnings Limit to qualify is removed.

Again, this change expands eligibility but does not solve the deeper problem: statutory sick pay in the UK remains low compared with real living costs. Removing the earnings threshold doesn't address the fact that SSP rates fail to provide genuine financial security during illness. It's a tweak, not a transformation.

3 Whistleblowing and Sexual Harassment Protections: *limited scope*

The Act will also make sexual harassment disclosures a protected whistleblowing disclosure from 6 April 2026. This means that workers who raise complaints about sexual harassment get legal protections against *detriment and unfair dismissal*.

While welcome in principle, this change is narrow in scope. It is not accompanied by the broad enforcement mechanisms or proactive prevention duties that unions have long demanded. Employers still have minimal regulatory pressure to prevent hostile workplaces before harm occurs.

4 Collective Redundancy Penalties: *increased but still weak leverage*

The maximum award for employers who fail to consult properly on collective redundancies will double – from 90 to 180 days' pay.

However, even this increase fails to bring penalty levels into meaningful parity with the disruption and livelihood damage caused by mass layoffs. The protective award remains a *cost of doing business* for many employers, not a deterrent.

5 Trade Union Recognition: *simplified, but not radically so*

From April 2026, the process for trade unions to be recognised for collective bargaining is to be simplified. The Government claims this will make it easier to secure union recognition in workplaces.

In practice, unions will still face bureaucratic thresholds and employer resistance. Simplification may speed up procedures but does not fundamentally rebalance power in favour of collective worker voices. True collective bargaining rights – especially automatic recognition in workplaces with union membership – remain distant.

6 The Fair Work Agency: *a new body with uncertain teeth*

The Act establishes a new Fair Work Agency from 7 April 2026 to enforce employment law, bringing together functions currently split across different regulators.

This could centralise enforcement, but critics warn that without strong statutory powers and clear resources, the agency risks becoming another layer of bureaucracy rather than a frontline defender of worker rights. Details on enforcement powers remain sparse and subject to future regulation.

Why these changes are a step, but not enough

Taken together, the April 2026 changes expand some worker rights and remove some long-standing barriers. But the reforms fall short in several key areas:

They often expand access but do not provide adequate substance for example, SSP remains too low to live on

They adjust existing rules rather than establishing new standards for fair work, fair pay, and secure employment.

Many of the most significant worker protections such as stronger protections against unfair dismissal, an end to exploitative fire-and-rehire practices, and fully funded parental pay are scheduled for 2027 or later or remain tied up in consultations.

This piecemeal, delayed approach is symptomatic of an Act that claims transformation while delivering incremental tweaks. For trade unionists and worker advocates pushing for an **Employment Rights Bill 2, it underscores the need for bolder, clearer, and more worker-centric legislation that tackles power imbalances head-on – not just on the margins.**

THE YEAR OF TRADE UNION CLIMATE ACTION

THIS IS OUR MOMENT. Across the world, workers are standing at the crossroads of crisis and change and we, the trade union movement, are stepping forward to lead. The climate emergency is no longer a distant threat. It's here, reshaping the world of work, transforming industries, and defining the future for generations to come. The question is not whether change will happen but who will shape it. **The Year of Trade Union Climate Action is our answer.**

The trade union movement has always been at its best when we've faced the big challenges head-on when we've organised, mobilised, and demanded that working people are at the heart of solutions. Climate action is no different. We cannot allow a transition that leaves workers behind, communities broken, or livelihoods destroyed.

We will not accept a future built on inequality, insecurity, and exploitation. Instead, we're fighting for a just transition one that delivers good, unionised green jobs, protects existing workers, and puts people and planet before profit.

OUR TIME TO LEAD CHANGE

This year, the movement will unite around a single call: *Climate action is union action.*

Every workplace, every sector, every branch and region has a role to play – because the climate crisis touches everything from the food we eat and the energy we use, to the homes we live in and the transport we rely on.

The solutions must come from workers, from the ground up, shaped by the collective power of our movement.

Building a worker-led transition

The transition to a greener economy must not be left to corporations or politicians. Workers have the knowledge, skills and creativity to drive change and unions have the organising power to make it happen.

Whether it's engineers in manufacturing retooling for renewables, food workers demanding sustainable supply chains, or public service workers pushing for low-carbon communities, unions are showing that climate justice is social justice.

Throughout this Year of Action, unions across the UK will share stories, tools, and victories that show what a worker-led transition looks like in practice.

We'll highlight workplaces reducing emissions through collective agreements, repurposing skills for new green industries, and holding employers to account for their environmental impact.

We'll amplify the voices of reps and members already leading the way and we'll support every union to take action, no matter where they start from.

Organising for Climate Justice

Climate breakdown is a class issue. It hits hardest those who have done least to cause it working-class communities, migrants, young people, and the Global South. *The fight for climate justice is inseparable from the fight for economic and social justice.*

Five things trade unionists need to know about the climate crisis

MYTHBUSTING CLIMATE DENIAL

1 Climate breakdown is affecting us already

UK temperatures reached a 40C record in 2022, and our homes and workplaces are badly equipped to deal with heatwaves, contributing to excess deaths.

In the UK, and around the world, farmers' crop yields have been hit by drought and floods, driving up food prices. Firefighters are having to battle both wildfires and floods. If we don't take action on climate change we will see climate disasters getting more frequent and more severe.

2 Drilling for fossil fuels won't give us cheap energy

Gas prices are set by the global market so oil companies (who own the oil and gas extracted) will sell it on internationally for the highest price they can get. And North Sea oil fields are running out. Whatever decisions are made about new oil fields, in just 15 years' time they will be able to supply at most around a sixth of the gas we currently burn.

Meanwhile, the cost of renewable energy has fallen dramatically - sun and wind are now the cheapest forms of power generation. We need to invest in energy for our future and a transition that secures decent and sustainable jobs for North Sea workers - not false promises.

3 The climate crisis is a social justice issue

The climate impact of the richest 1%, globally, is the same as that of the poorest two-thirds of humanity combined - and the hurricanes, floods, droughts and heatwaves that climate breakdown bring are hitting those who have done least to cause the crisis. In the UK, as elsewhere, the worst impacts will fall on the disabled, elderly and young, and those on the lowest incomes. We need to stand together in global solidarity with workers and communities around the world, while rejecting racism and division here in the UK.

4 The market can't solve the climate crisis

Privatisation and market-dependence can't deliver effectively on the scale needed, don't centre people's needs, and leave the door open to fossil fuel greenwash. We need climate jobs. We need investment in renewable energy and home insulation as the only way to get energy bills down and keep them down. We need to move towards public ownership and democratic control of energy and other crucial services.

5 Climate action can help our workplaces and communities

Taking action on the climate crisis and building a fairer society go together. We can plan our towns and cities so they are more resilient to heatwaves and floods, with good affordable public transport and clean air. We must build and adapt homes so they are cheaper to heat and easier to cool down, and build more wind and solar energy - now much cheaper than fossil fuels. We need to prioritise the needs of communities, including ensuring workers have decent, well-paid and unionised jobs building a sustainable future.

IT'S TIME TO ACT

Find out more about the trade union year of climate action:

cacctu.org.uk/yoa



It's about who owns and controls the wealth of the world, who bears the costs of transition, and who reaps the rewards of a sustainable future.

As trade unionists, we know that power concedes nothing without a fight. So, this year, we're building power: in workplaces, in communities, and across borders. We're training green reps, strengthening our bargaining agendas, and demanding national investment in a just transition that creates decent, secure jobs for all. We're calling for a **Green New Deal** built by and for working people not dictated by corporate boardrooms or short-term profit motives.

From Words to Action



The **Year of Trade Union Climate Action** is not just about raising awareness it's about action, collaboration, and transformation. It's about connecting the dots between the cost-of-living crisis, energy security, and the climate emergency. It's about showing that union-led climate action isn't a niche campaign – it's central to the future of our movement and our planet.

Through this hub, you'll find resources to support your union's climate work, events and campaigns to get involved in, and stories of workers already taking action to make the change we need.

Together, we'll build momentum workplace by workplace, sector by sector until climate action is embedded in every part of trade union life.

The climate crisis demands courage, solidarity, and imagination. And those are the very qualities that have always defined our movement.

This is our time to lead, to show that when workers rise together, we don't just defend the past: *we create the future.*

Join us. Organise. Act. Build the worker-led transition.

...because there can be no just transition without workers and no future without climate action.

In Solidarity
Sarah

BFAWU BRIEFING: HEALTH & SAFETY IN BRITAIN 2025

The scale of the crisis



HSE Health & Safety Executive

The **Health and Safety Executive's** latest report (**HSSH2425**) shows widespread harm:

- 1.9 million workers suffering work-related ill health.
- 964,000 with work-related stress, depression or anxiety.
- 511,000 with musculoskeletal disorders.
- 392,000 other work-related illnesses.
- 680,000 self-reported workplace injuries.
- 59,219 employer-reported RIDDOR injuries.
- 124 workers killed at work.
- 40.1 million working days lost.
- £22.9 billion annual cost.

Why this matters for BFAWU sectors

High-risk industries include food manufacturing, hospitality, retail, distribution and warehousing.

Common hazards: heat, cold, repetitive strain, slips and trips, harassment, workload pressure, dust and chemical exposure, poor manual handling.

The human cost

These numbers represent workers in chronic pain, long-term illness, financial hardship or forced out of work.

Why unions make workplaces safer

Union safety reps:

- identify hazards
- demand proper risk assessments
- ensure PPE and staffing levels
- support reporting and investigation
- reduce injuries and ill health

BFAWU demands...

For employers:

- Union-led safety committees
- Psychosocial risk assessments
- Safe staffing levels
- Ergonomic standards
- Heat-safety protections
- Decent sick pay
- Violence and harassment protections
- Regular union walk-throughs

For government:

- Restore HSE funding
- Enforce stress and harassment as safety hazards
- Stronger rights for safety reps
- Tougher penalties for breaches

What reps can do now

- 1 Put H&S on every agenda
- 2 Run surveys on stress, harassment, MSDs, heat
- 3 Request full risk assessments
- 4 Encourage early reporting
- 5 Push for joint inspections
- 6 Challenge unsafe staffing
- 7 Link H&S to pay
- 8 Recruit members

Conclusion

Britain's workplaces remain unsafe, but union organisation saves lives.

Stronger unions. Safer workplaces. Better lives.

Join BFAWU!

THE RIGHT TO FOOD COMMISSION

Putting food justice at the heart of policy

IN A POWERFUL STEP FORWARD for food justice in the UK, the **Right to Food UK Commission** was formally launched in Parliament on 17 November 2025. Established through a collaboration between the *Right to Food Campaign*, led in Parliament by **Ian Byrne MP**, the *University of Westminster*, the **Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)**, and the *Food and Work Network*, this landmark Commission aims to transform how the UK confronts hunger and food insecurity.

Why a 'Right to Food Commission'?

Food insecurity in Britain is not only an economic problem – it is a political failure. Millions of people in our communities struggle to afford healthy, nutritious food every day. The Commission exists to shine a spotlight on the unacceptable nature of this crisis and to develop practical, evidence-based solutions for ending hunger in the UK.

At its core, the Commission seeks to develop a roadmap for a statutory Right to Food law, anchored in human rights principles and informed by evidence from across the UK. Its overarching goal is ambitious but necessary: to end hunger in the UK by 2035, with an interim objective of reducing food insecurity by at least 50% by 2030.

How the commission works

The Commission is based in the UK Parliament and has begun a series of evidence sessions across the four nations – including Liverpool, Newcastle, Belfast, Glasgow, Cardiff, and London – to hear directly from individuals, communities, activists, and experts about their lived experience of food insecurity.

Each regional session is preceded by a citizens' assembly, ensuring that the voices of people experiencing food poverty are central to the Commission's findings and recommendations.

The evidence-gathering process is wide-ranging, considering factors such as:

- The extent and nature of food insecurity across diverse regions of the UK
- The impact of labour market conditions, welfare policy, and cost of living pressures
- How public policy can more effectively tackle food insecurity at national, regional, and local levels
- How best to support community-led food initiatives
- How to legislate for a strong, enforceable Right to Food law that leaves no room for retrograde policy shifts.

RIGHT TO FOOD UK COMMISSION
CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY
 Liverpool. Thursday 29th January 2026

HUNGER IS A POLITICAL CHOICE

www.ianbyrne.org/rtfcommission

BAKERS FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (BFAWU)
FAWN food & work network
 UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

RIGHT TO FOOD UK COMMISSION
 Knowsley session - 30th January 2026

www.ianbyrne.org/rtfcommission

BAKERS FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (BFAWU)
FAWN food & work network
 UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER



Framing the commission’s work

The Commission’s deliberations are firmly grounded in the five key demands of the Right to Food Campaign, which are:

- **Universal Free School Meals** – ensuring every child can access nutritious meals at school
- **Transparency on Food Costs** – government must reveal how food costs are weighed in minimum wage and benefit calculations
- **Independent Enforcement** – establishing a regulatory body to hold decision-makers to account
- **Community Kitchens** – sustainable funding for community food hubs, meals-on-wheels, dining clubs, and kitchen initiatives
- **Ensured Food Security** – integrating food security into all relevant policy areas.

A broad and inclusive commission

The Commission brings together a wide range of expertise across civil society, academia, public health, and worker representation. Chaired by **Professor Barrie Margetts** of the University of Southampton, with **Ian Byrne MP** and BFAWU General Secretary **Sarah Woolley** as Vice Chairs, its membership reflects the complex, intersectional nature of food justice work. Commissioners include *local councillors, public health professionals, human rights advocates, academics, union leaders and community representatives.*

What this means for BFAWU members

BFAWU has been a proud partner in the Right to Food Campaign and the Commission’s work from the outset the General Secretary is one of the Vice Chairs. The Union’s leadership on food justice reflects our members’ daily experience of insecure work, inflation-driven cost pressures, and the importance of dignity in food access. BFAWU’s involvement in the Commission ensures that these realities help shape policy recommendations that could transform lives across the UK.

The Commission’s roadmap will provide a blueprint for legislators, policymakers, community groups and unions alike offering a path to structurally end hunger and ensure that food is recognised as a right, not a privilege.

As the evidence gathering continues through to later in 2026, BFAWU members and activists are encouraged to engage, submit evidence, and help drive forward a campaign rooted in **solidarity, fairness and justice.**

RIGHT TO FOOD UK COMMISSION

We'd like to hear from you:

- What is your experience of feeding yourself, your family and community in the last few years?
- Have you experienced any positive changes or challenges? How are you coping with the challenges?
- Have you had any support? If so, from whom? Did it help?
- What one thing would make a difference for you, your family and/or your community?
- If the government promised a legal Right to Food, what should that include for you?

Scan the QR code to share your views and experiences with the Right To Food UK Commission.



UNITING AGAINST HATE

TOGETHER

Why Together matters – and why BFAWU is proud to stand with it

AT A MOMENT WHEN our communities face rising hate, hostility and division, a new alliance has emerged with a clear and urgent purpose: to bring people together. The *Together* coalition – a broad movement of organisations, community groups, trade unions, and civil society voices – recognises that the politics of division harms us all. It understands that none of us can tackle the challenges of our time alone, and that only collective action, rooted in solidarity and compassion, can push back against the forces that seek to drive wedges between us.

For the BFAWU, built by workers from every corner of the globe, joining *Together* is not only right – it is **necessary**. Our members know better than most what happens when communities are set against each other. They experience first-hand how division in society translates into exploitation in workplaces. And they understand that hate is never abstract: it is felt in the shift patterns, on the shop floor, on public transport, in our neighbourhoods, and too often in the precarious workplaces that feed the nation.

Hate and division are tools – not natural forces

The rising levels of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and anti-LGBTQ+ hatred we see today are not sudden or spontaneous. They are tools. Politicians and reactionary commentators use them to deflect attention from the real causes of hardship: low pay, insecure work, austerity, crumbling public services, and an economic model that works only for the wealthy.

When people are struggling to heat their homes, feed their families, or keep their heads above water, those in power too often reach for an easy scapegoat. Migrants. Refugees. Single parents. LGBTQ+ people. Religious minorities. They hope we will turn on each other instead of demanding better from those who hold real power.

The *Together* alliance rejects this wholeheartedly. It understands that when the far right or the political establishment sow division, they do so because they fear what happens when ordinary people stand side by side. United communities can demand justice. United workers can win change. United movements can transform society.

That is why those who benefit from the status quo try so hard to keep us divided.

Our members represent the world – and the best of it

Few unions reflect modern Britain as clearly as the BFAWU. Walk into a bakery, food manufacturing plant, distribution centre or fast-food outlet today, and you will find workers from every region of the world. You will hear dozens of languages. You will see every culture, faith, and background represented. Our union is not simply inclusive – it is proudly and fundamentally *international*.

This diversity is our strength. It enriches our workplaces. It widens our perspectives. It strengthens our campaigns. And it builds the solidarity that has sustained the BFAWU for over a century.

It is also why we must be absolutely clear: when our members are targeted with hate, the whole union is targeted. When migrants are demonised, our members are demonised. When racism or misogyny or xenophobia are allowed to fester in society, our workplaces become less safe and our communities more divided. Hate crime rises. Exploitation rises. Fear rises.

By joining the *Together* alliance, we are making a simple but powerful statement: **an injury to one is an injury to all**. We will not allow any member of our union, or any member of our wider community, to be left isolated or unsafe.

Unity is not naïve – it is practical

Some argue that movements for unity are sentimental or unrealistic. But the truth is the opposite: unity is the most practical and effective strategy for improving everyday life.

When communities stand together:

- hate groups lose their foothold;
- politicians find it harder to scapegoat;
- workers are less vulnerable to exploitation;
- mental health outcomes improve;
- neighbourhoods feel safer;
- public services gain broad public support;
- and campaigns for change become stronger.

Division, by contrast, has a real economic cost. A divided workforce is a weaker workforce. A fearful community is a more easily manipulated one. A society that blames the most marginalised cannot fix the structural problems that affect us all.

Unity is not a slogan – it is a strategy. It is how we win better pay, safer workplaces, stronger rights, and a society where everyone can thrive.

Building a movement to reject hate in all its forms

What makes *Together* so important is that it brings organisations across civil society into one broad, inclusive coalition. Trade unions, community groups, cultural organisations, faith communities, and campaigners are standing side by side to build a proactive, positive alternative to hate.



This matters because hate is not confined to one issue or one group. Racism, misogyny, transphobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-migrant hatred share the same underlying logic – dividing people into 'deserving' and 'undeserving', 'us' and 'them'. Fighting one form of hate means fighting them all.

The BFAWU's involvement is therefore rooted in our everyday work. When we educate workplace reps on challenging discrimination, when we support members facing harassment, when we campaign for safer workplaces, and when we stand up against exploitative employers, we are taking practical action against hate. *Joining Together* amplifies that work and connects it to a national movement with shared purpose.

We all have a role in shaping the future

Our society stands at a crossroads. We can allow division to deepen – and watch as our services collapse, our rights are eroded, and our communities grow more hostile and uncertain. Or we can choose *solidarity*.

We can choose to build a future where our differences are *celebrated*, not weaponised. A future where migrants are *welcomed*, not scapegoated. A future where workplace rights are *strengthened*, not weakened. A future where women and girls are *safe*, where LGBTQ+ people are *respected*, where religious minorities are *protected*, and where workers from all backgrounds can organise *without fear*.

That future has to be built – through organising, education, solidarity, and collective action. The BFAWU has always been part of that work, and the *Together* alliance gives us another vital platform to continue it.

Standing together is how we win

Hate wants us small. Division wants us silent. But solidarity makes us powerful.

The BFAWU's decision to join *Together* sends a message that needs to be heard loudly and clearly – we reject the politics of fear and division. We believe in hope. We believe in equality. We believe in the strength of communities united in common purpose.

Our members – from Britain, from Europe, from Asia, from Africa, from the Middle East, from the Caribbean, from everywhere – deserve a country where they are safe, respected, and valued. A country where they can work without fear, live with dignity, and raise their children in communities built on trust rather than suspicion.

By standing together, we can build that country. AND WE WILL.

WORKERS' VOICES



WORKERS' VOICES ON TRADE UNION EDUCATION 2026



The **General Federation of Trade Unions' Educational Trust**, in partnership with **SOAS University of London** has launched a survey for all workers on trade union education.

This survey is to understand why some workers join unions and some don't, and what barriers and gaps exist in trade union education today, and what you want to see more of! GFTU is planning to write a comprehensive report to be presented end of the year at the parliament in Westminster.

The survey is about your experience with trade unions and union education, and you don't have to be part of a union to take this survey. This is open to ALL workers in Britain and Ireland. You don't have to be a citizen. It doesn't matter if you are British, Irish, or whatever nationality or your immigration status. You can be a gig economy worker, an employee, or even currently out of work.

It's all anonymous, unless you choose to provide your email to be invited for the launch at the parliament. And even so, of course, all your responses will be strictly confidential. No one in your union will know whether you've taken part, nor see what you've said. It only takes 3-7 minutes. It's your chance to let your voice heard.

Go take part now by clicking the link above.

MY NAME IS ISLAM HADIDANE and I joined the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union in 2025, but I had a massive interest in politics before that, stemming from my love of history – searching for explanations of what happened in the past, *why* it happened, and why similar occurrences happen **now**.

This was my mindset until a certain point when I read an eye-opening book titled *'The State of Africa'* by Martin Meredith. It explored themes such as the myriad of problems suffered by the 'Third World' (or 'LIDCs' – *Low Income Developing Countries*), a term completely dismissive of the countless misfortunes Africa, Asia and Latin America have faced up until now. Reading the book conflicted with a lot of what I had learnt in school and in other books, and it opened my eyes to the term '*neo-colonialism*', with big, colonialist empires like the USA, Russia, and NATO-aligned countries, frequently propping up dictators and client regimes around the globe.

I also explored the theme of neo-colonialism in the book *'Cold War'* by Jeremy Isaacs, and this reinforced my thought about the role Western Powers and Russia and China played in keeping the Third World at arm's length. I also distrust the United States' foreign policy and Russia and China's too (solidarity does not mean silence), in supporting liberation movements which condemn the apartheid in Occupied Palestine and suggesting the ideals of Democratic Socialism must always go hand in hand with a commitment to democracy and human dignity. I wrote a piece in response to JD Vance's woeful speech littered with xenophobic bile at the *Munich Security Conference* in which he ignorantly attacked Europe and the Third World.

I really began paying attention to politics in 2017 after Jeremy Corbyn's campaign with Labour in the General Election, and I remember watching the TV debate where Theresa May didn't even turn up. Jeremy Corbyn's leadership helped politicise a generation, myself included, by opening space for discussions around anti-imperialism, public ownership, and social justice. His language and speech urged me to read more about him, and I ended up being convinced by Jeremy and was thoroughly disappointed when the Tories won the election. I saw him again on TV when he debated Boris Johnson and again during the first Palestine marches in 2023.

I knew that his voice was one of truth and one of resilience in comparison to the current 'Blue Labour' government whose approach to genocide and an impossible cost of living crisis has been laconic to say the least.



A YOUNG BFAWU MEMBER STARTING OUT

I was politically homeless for a brief time, as the new model of the Labour Party didn't represent me and parties like the SWP, or the Greens fell short in certain departments such as dismantling privatisation and Gaza.

In the 2024 general election, Jeremy held his seat which brought me joy, and his declaration of a new party got my interest right away. Equally important, Shockat Adam beat Jon Ashworth in Leicester South. I later managed to get hold of Mr Adam and arrange a visit to his office where we discussed a visit to PMQs, the political landscape, his journey to election, his preparation of future successors and possible opportunities to volunteer or work alongside him. He let me know of possible speaking courses and civil rights courses, which I am really interested in.

I was checking my emails and stumbled across an email from *Your Party* about Jeremy Corbyn coming to Leicester. I couldn't believe it and signed up to it as fast as I could. It was in the Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church when Jeremy arrived to chants of '*Oh Jeremy Corbyn*' to the tune of the only song I can play on a guitar, *Seven Nation Army*. I managed to ask Jeremy a question regarding the establishment of the biggest youth wing in the country, to which he replied the rather witty name of '*Yourth*'.

It was at this event that I met **George Atwall**, who gave me his card and told me that the BFAWU worked well with Jeremy and Shockat. I went home and researched the BFAWU, and I found out it's the second oldest Trade Union in the UK.

It's also the only one that is aligned with *Your Party* and truly independent. As a political hopeful, I understood the benefits of working with a union, and I saw past greats such as Nye Bevan and Jeremy Corbyn who were Reps in a Trade Union.

Being part of the BFAWU gave me a chance to get help and advice from those who are on the front line against wage inequality, rampant billionaires putting profits before people and racism in real time.

I met Jeremy again when he came to Leicester to endorse Riaz Khan for the CEC of *Your Party*. I managed to ask a question regarding *Yourth* and possibly working on it alongside Jeremy. I also managed to get a much better photograph with Jeremy (see above!) and now I have a PMQs visit alongside Shockat Adam on the horizon, hopefully more volunteering with Riaz Khan and community activists and, of course, trying everything I can to get *Yourth* into a tangible safe haven for all young socialists and unionists and of course those who may not be a part of the contemporary political activism, but are willing to try to make our country better not just for 1%, 10% or even 50%, but for the 99%.

My ambition is to become a Member of Parliament not for status, but to represent people who have been locked out of politics for far too long. Politics should not belong to wealthy elites or distant institutions but instead it should belong to working people. Parliament is not the goal; it is simply the place where that representation must happen.

Islam Hadidane

CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Calling It Out: Talking About 'Unwanted Sexual Attention' at Work

We are looking for women and non-binary workers in the UK to take part in a focus group to talk about unwanted sexual attention and sexual harassment in the workplace. You may be eligible if:

- You are a woman (cis, trans and intersex) or are non-binary.
- You are aged 18+
- You speak English.
- You work in the UK, in a school, in health and social care, the hospitality and leisure industries, or are a gig-worker.
- You are interested in talking about how sexual harassment and unwanted sexual attention are talked about in the workplace, and how this could be improved. (You do not need to have experienced or witnessed this to take part).

What's involved:

- A 1.5 – 2 hour online focus group with other workers led by a woman researcher.
- Your responses will be kept confidential, and you'll be anonymised in the research.
- You will need internet access and a private space to take part. You will need your camera on for the length of the focus group (the focus group will only be audio-recorded, the conversation will then be typed up and anonymised, and the recording deleted).

As thanks for taking part, you'll receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher.

If you are interested in taking part, want more information or have any questions, please contact the research team:

Dr Ruth Beresford, r.e.beresford@shu.ac.uk

Dr Bob Jeffery, r.f.jeffery@shu.ac.uk

This project has received ethical approval from Sheffield Hallam University.

WORK YOUR BRAIN

WORDSEARCH

How many words can you find?

F	K	G	W	J	D	R	E	F	A	S
O	B	E	S	O	N	L	I	N	E	T
O	D	N	E	I	R	P	I	X	S	H
D	E	E	S	N	A	Q	R	U	T	G
S	T	R	I	K	E	H	U	M	B	I
M	A	A	N	L	L	P	O	W	E	R
A	I	L	A	F	D	Y	Y	V	D	O
R	L	B	G	V	A	H	Z	O	K	E
T	L	G	R	E	T	A	M	I	L	C
Y	T	H	O	P	E	T	D	C	T	K
R	H	W	I	N	S	E	Q	E	U	F

WORDS CAN GO IN ANY DIRECTION (inc diagonally)!

Clue: you will find all of the words in this Foodworker... if you look closely enough!

SUDOKU

Fill the 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contains all of the digits between 1 and 9

				1	8	3		7
				9			1	8
			6					9
	3					5	9	
		1						
2	7				3			
1	4						6	
					9			
		9	3		7	4		

difficulty: *medium*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

CROSSWORD

	1		2		3		4		5		6	
7					8							
9												
10			11					12				
							13					
14	15					16					17	
						18						
19									20			
21										22		

Across

- 7 Engrave with acid (4)
- 8 Unequal (3-5)
- 9 Belittle (13)
- 10 Husky (7)
- 12 Pile (5)
- 14 Leers (5)
- 16 Burnt (7)
- 19 Close mental application (13)
- 21 Army dining room (4,4)
- 22 Near (4)

Down

- 1 Odour (6)
- 2 Old form of you (4)
- 3 Politician's badge (7)
- 4 Divinity (5)
- 5 Distance across a circle (8)
- 6 Infected (6)
- 11 Cloudy (8)
- 13 Soon (7)
- 15 Dealer in foodstuffs (6)
- 17 Adequate (6)
- 18 Type of filling (5)
- 20 Melody (4)

Solutions to last issue's puzzles: Post Conference 2025

SUDOKU: very easy

7	6	4	3	5	1	2	8	9
2	1	3	9	8	6	4	5	7
8	9	5	4	2	7	6	1	3
6	5	7	2	1	3	8	9	4
4	8	2	5	6	9	3	7	1
9	3	1	7	4	8	5	2	6
3	7	8	6	9	5	1	4	2
1	2	9	8	3	4	7	6	5
5	4	6	1	7	2	9	3	8

CROSSWORD

1	K	2	I	R	3	C	4	H	5	B	6	E	7	T	8	R	9	A	Y					
	S		O		A		E		O		N													
8	S		U		P		E		R		M		A		R		K		E	T				
	U		R		D		T		Y		A													
9	N		E		P		A		L		E		S		E		10	U	C	H				
							N		N		N													
11	B	12	E		L		O		W			13	S	14	T		U		D	Y				
	A											15	A		16	A		U						
17	C		R		O		P		18	M		A		T		T		R		E	20	S	S	
	P		R		U		H																	
21	L		O		U		D		S		P		E		A		K		E		R			
	U										N		E		N		E							
22	A		G		R		E		E		S		23	A		N		Y		O		N		E

WORDSEARCH

- 1 GREEN
- 2 JUSTICE
- 3 MARKET
- 4 FAILURE
- 5 BAME
- 6 YOUTH
- 7 SUSTAINABLE
- 8 COP
- 9 CRISIS
- 10 POWER
- 11 CHECKOUT
- 12 BUDGET
- 13 BNPL [Buy Now, Pay Later]
- 14 FOOD
- 15 INFLATION
- 16 NOMINATE
- 17 MILL
- 18 REFUND
- 19 SPAIN
- 20 HIVE

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JOIN US!

BAKERS
FOOD
AND ALLIED
WORKERS
UNION



If you or any of your work colleagues are interested in what the BFAWU can offer, scan the QR code to find out more and **Join this Great Union!**



If you're already a member: **IMPORTANT!**

It is important that you keep us updated with any changes to your name, address or contact details.

We send out regular all member emails via mailchimp, if you aren't receiving them, it is probably because we don't have an email address for you, or that we are using an old one!

If you think something has changed in the last 12 months or so, please do take a few minutes to update your details with us.

You can either do it using this QR code, or via your Branch Secretary

