

Young Members Forum

Becoming active in BECTU and beyond

Liz Hardwick turned up to BECTU's 2012 annual conference as an observer – and in just two years has gone on to represent the union internationally. Why don't you get more involved?

So you joined your union because you wanted support in the workplace, because your colleagues convinced you it was a good idea, or simply for the cheap Public Liability Insurance for freelancers, right?

Well, now is the time to think where else the union path could lead you, what projects or campaigns you could support and the array of opportunities you could have at your fingertips.

BECTU is a member-focused organisation and I've found the events and support are only limited by your involvement. Do you know what, it can actually be a lot of fun too!

My journey to becoming an active union member started back in May 2012 at the BECTU conference in Manchester, where I attended as a local observer.

There I was supported by my lovely national official, Jo Livesey, and was welcomed warmly by the young members from London. I was inspired by how many of the delegates had similar opinions and ethos to me around workers' rights, and it was suggested I attend branch meetings to find out more.

ENGAGING

The North West Freelance branch was engaging and it was great to learn more about what goes on in a union, but I couldn't help notice I was the youngest by far in the room. So, when I got asked to join the BECTU team on the trade stand at BVE North a few months later, my focus was to enlist some new members to join in too. I'm very happy and proud to say that almost all young members I've signed up are now active in their branches and the Young Members Forum.



Liz Hardwick, right, celebrates the Young Members Forum winning the Brian Kelly Memorial Award at this year's conference

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But what's missing now, is getting to you, those existing members, who want to get more involved but don't quite know where to start.

In 2013 I became vice-chair of the Young Members Forum and since then I've tried to say yes to every opportunity to promote unions, schedule permitting (after all I do run my own business and have to work at some point too). I feel it's also improved my contacts, confidence and profile, so not only great for the union and members, but personally too!

I felt so honoured to represent BECTU at IATSE's first Young Workers' conference in 2012 in Philadelphia; and this year joined union reps from across Europe for Uni Europa Youth's

winter school and seminars in Brussels and Athens, learning how the EU is effecting young workers' lives.

So I'm proof that if you get stuck in you can do some amazing things within the union. We've linked up with other unions and the TUC, talked to hundreds of people on trade stands, run several campaigns and networking events, and even started up our own micro get-togethers in the North West.

I feel like we're building not only a network of colleagues and friends, but a collective of people who believe in fighting for a brighter future for all.

Surely you want to be in on that? Then take that first step, contact BECTU today! •

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