

Press release: Trade Union Act measures come into force to protect people from undemocratic industrial action

Measures coming into force today (1 March 2017) will protect millions of people from the effects of undemocratic strike action

- Tougher ballot thresholds will reduce industrial action in important public services like transport, health and education by 35%
- 1.5 million working hours a year will be saved from strike action
- Measures will provide a £100 million boost to UK economy over 10 years

Trade Union Act measures come into force today (1 March 2017) to protect millions of people from the effects of undemocratic strike action.

The Act will ensure that if strikes do go ahead it will only be as a result of a clear democratic decision from union members thanks to the introduction of tougher ballot thresholds.

From today, fresh ballots will have to achieve at least a 50% turnout of eligible union members, with a majority voting in favour of strike action. In important public services – including in the health, education and transport sectors – an additional threshold of 40% of support from all eligible members must be met for action to be legal.

The Act will also:

- reduce strikes in important public services by 35%
- prevent more than 1.5 million working hours a year from being lost to strike action
- boost the economy by £10 million a year

Business Minister Margot James said:

“The public has a right to be protected from unsupported disruption being caused by a small proportion of union members and that’s exactly what the

Trade Union Act will do.”

From 1 March, the Act will also require unions to:

- give employers a minimum of 14 days’ notice before industrial action rather than the previous seven days
- set a six-month time limit – which can be increased to nine months if the union and employer agree – for industrial action so that mandates are always recent
- provide a clearer description of the trade dispute and the planned industrial action on the ballot paper, so that all union members know what they are voting for
- provide more detailed information to union members about ballot results, including how many union members were entitled to vote and whether the relevant thresholds have been met
- report more detailed information on industrial action, ballot results and expenditure of political funds to the Certification Officer, the unions’ regulator, which will then be made public
- ensure supervision of picket lines to ensure they are peaceful
- implement an opt-in system for new members on contributing to political funds within 12 months

Notes to editors

1. From today, unions have until 1 March 2018 to ensure all new members joining will have to make an active choice to opt into their union’s political fund. Previously new members would have to opt out of contributing to a union’s political fund.
2. The [Codes of Practice on Picketing](#) and [Industrial Action Ballots and Information to Employers](#) have been updated to reflect these legal changes and come into effect on 1 March 2017.
3. The Trade Union Act also introduces new measures in relation to the Certification Officer who will be given new enforcement powers, a financial penalties scheme, and a cost-recovery levy scheme. The Government will consult on proposals for the financial penalties and levy schemes in due course.

4. Sir Ken Knight will today begin gathering evidence for his independent review of electronic balloting for industrial disputes