

1 IN 8 MEN WILL GET PROSTATE CANCER UNITE THE UNION, HELPING TO RAISE AWARENESS

Prostate cancer in the
workplace - A negotiating
guide for reps



UNITE: FIGHTING FOR JOBS ■ PAY ■ CONDITIONS

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A MESSAGE FOR UNITE REPS

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK and will touch the lives of many Unite members. We estimate that **over 45 percent of Unite members** in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber (NEYH) region fall into the *high risk* category for prostate cancer.

It's crucial to highlight that early-stage prostate cancer is very curable with almost 100 percent of men diagnosed with Stages 1 or 2 surviving their first five years or more following their diagnosis.¹ In comparison, only 50 percent of men diagnosed at Stage 4 will survive five years or more after diagnosis. Which is why risk awareness is so important.

Unite NEYH is proud to be working with Prostate Cancer UK on this important campaign.

By negotiating the goals outlined in this pack with employers we can help save lives.

Our goal is simple. We want employers to work with Unite to **run awareness raising campaigns in the workplace to encourage men to know their risk of prostate cancer and seek health support when they need it.** We're also calling on employers to install sanitary bins in men's and unisex toilets for all workers suffering from incontinence, (including when caused by prostate cancer treatment).

Bladder and bowel incontinence, which are commonly linked to prostate cancer treatment, are a hidden source of stress and unnecessary embarrassment for many men. Installing proper sanitary bins will enable men to dispose of their incontinence pads and sanitary waste discreetly and with dignity. This is an important step to reducing stigma and avoiding worse physical and mental health outcomes for the men affected.

This resource pack for Unite reps has everything you need to make the case and run a Prostate Cancer campaign in your workplace. From how to start a conversation with your employer to raising awareness with colleagues, it's all here.

Thank you for your support. Let's be there for our members, together.

Kind regards

Karen Reay

Regional Secretary
North East, Yorkshire and Humber



¹ Office for National Statistics, 2019, "Cancer Survival in England: Stage at Diagnosis and Childhood Patients Followed Up to 2018", Office for National Statistics.

WHY THIS CAMPAIGN MATTERS TO OUR MEMBERS?

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men.

According to Prostate Cancer UK, around 510,000 men are living with or after prostate cancer in the UK. Every year, an additional 52,000 men are diagnosed and more than 12,000 die from this disease. This makes prostate cancer the UK's second biggest cancer killer in men in the UK, after lung cancer.

WHO IS AT RISK?

There are three main prostate cancer risk factors, which are things you can't change:

- Getting **older** – prostate cancer mainly affects men aged 50 or over. 1 in 8 men will be diagnosed with it in their lifetime.
- Being **Black** – in the UK, 1 in 4 Black men will get prostate cancer in their lifetime.
- Having a **family history** of prostate cancer (a father or brother) increases a man's risk by 2-4 times. Men's risk of getting prostate cancer may also be higher if their mother or sister has had breast or ovarian cancer.

EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

For many men, prostate cancer often has no symptoms in its early stages, but the earlier it's diagnosed the better the treatment outcomes, so screening and knowing the symptoms is crucial.

Early-stage prostate cancer is very curable with almost 100 per cent of men diagnosed with Stage 1 or 2 prostate cancer surviving five years or more following their diagnosis. In comparison, only 50 percent of men diagnosed at Stage 4 will survive five years or more after diagnosis.

Ethnicity

Black men are more likely to get prostate cancer than other men, and at a younger age. In the UK, about 1 in 4 black men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. If you are a black man, your risk may increase once you're over 45.



STEP 1 CHECK YOUR RISK IN 30 SECONDS

The first step is education. An awareness raising campaign at work will allow men to recognise their individual risk factors for prostate cancer and empower them to make informed choices about their health.

Prostate Cancer UK has a [30 second online risk checker](https://cutt.ly/ProstateCheck) which can be shared with staff, providing balanced information about risk factors and about the PSA blood test that men can request from their GP. See it here: <https://cutt.ly/ProstateCheck>

STEP 2 SUPPORT WHEN MEN NEED IT

The second step is providing men with the opportunity and support if they choose to have a PSA blood test. A flexible workplace policy for men, which enables them to attend GP appointments about their prostate health, shows staff that they are valued and that their health is taken seriously by their employer.

Urinary problems are a common side effect of prostate cancer treatment, with bowel incontinence occurring less frequently, but still a risk.

Overall, 1 in 25 men aged over 40 will experience some form of urinary leakage every year, with 1 percent of men experiencing bowel incontinence, which rises to 5.1 percent for those aged over 60.

Male incontinence is a subject that is not properly talked about or understood. Male incontinence can significantly impact mental and physical health, causing feelings of shame, embarrassment and anxiety. We want to change this by raising awareness and tackling the taboo. No worker should suffer in silence.

A big issue for men suffering from incontinence is that they often have nowhere to dispose of their sanitary waste products. Too many men are being forced to put their wet, sodden incontinence pads into rucksacks and carry them home to dispose of them. Others are being forced to wear pads for longer than they should, which can cause health problems, including sores, rashes, urinary tract infections and fungal infections. We also know that men are isolating themselves, which can lead to missed days at work and a negative impact on their mental health.

STEP 3 TACKLING THE TABOO

Unite believes that installing sanitary bins in male toilets is an important step in reducing the stigma of male incontinence. We're calling for employers, businesses and public loos across the UK to install a sanitary bin in at least one male cubicle. This would enable our members to dispose of their incontinence pads, stoma/bag waste products and other hygiene waste items easily, safely and with dignity.

Better provision in the workplace should be part of a much-needed national conversation about male incontinence and prostate cancer. As well as improving physical health outcomes, more openness and awareness on these issues will make it easier for men to seek support with related emotional and mental health needs, and access vital services.

SECURING SUPPORT FROM EMPLOYERS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

ACTION POINTS FOR NEGOTIATORS

1. SECURE AGREEMENT FROM THE EMPLOYER TO SIGN THE PROSTATE CANCER PROTOCOL

The Protocol outlines how to run a prostate cancer risk awareness raising campaign in the workplace and sets out the need for sanitary provision to be made available in all toilets, as well as provisions around toilet dignity and paid time off for health screening.

Remember to negotiate specific agreements for inclusion in the Protocol that are appropriate to your workplace, particularly with reference to roles where access to toilet facilities or toilet breaks is a known issue.

2. NEGOTIATE SANITARY PROVISION FOR MEN IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Sanitary bins in at least one cubicle in all men's toilets ensures equality of provision and offers dignity to men, some of whom will be diagnosed with prostate cancer or a long-term health condition. Cubicles with sanitary bins should be identified with clear signage. This provides a safe, hygienic and easy way to dispose of sanitary waste, which helps to reduce stress, anxiety and embarrassment.

Remind employers that installing male sanitary bins ensures workers have access to essential services, while having a positive impact on their mental and physical health. The cost is not prohibitive and by preventing waste products from being flushed down toilets, employers can save significantly by reducing the risk of blockages and expensive repairs.

Check out the Prostate Cancer UK's briefing on costings at: <https://prostatecanceruk.org/webpkgcache.com/doc/-/s/prostatecanceruk.org/media/34vImpug/final-costings-boys-need-bins-2023.docx>

3. NEGOTIATE IMPROVEMENTS TO ACCESS TO TOILET FACILITIES FOR ALL WORKERS

In industries, such as passenger and road transport, access to toilet facilities and breaks remains an issue. This is a critical issue for all workers, but there is a heightened impact on workers affected by incontinence.

Unite's demands include:

- 24-hour access to facilities.
- Shift-planning and scheduling agreements, which include adequate time for toilet breaks.
- Written procedures on what to do if you need a comfort break while away from facilities (e.g. while driving).

4. NEGOTIATE THE INCLUSION OF A MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS' CLAUSE IN YOUR EXISTING LEAVE POLICY

This clause should include provision for time off with pay for regular cancer and other medical screening appointments for every member of the workforce, and time off with pay for treatment, as needed. There is not a national screening programme for prostate cancer, so men will not get invited to have a test.

Men at risk, who have discussed the harms and the benefits of the PSA test, have a right to a PSA test from a trained health professional if they want one. The clause should therefore specifically mention paid time off to attend GP appointments for Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood tests.

KEY NEGOTIATING DEMANDS:

- ✓ Appropriate sanitary bins in at least one cubicle in every men's and unisex toilet facilities, with appropriate signage
- ✓ Employer commitment to ongoing prostate cancer risk awareness raising campaigns
- ✓ Employer commitment to ensuring that all workers have adequate access to toilet facilities throughout their shift
- ✓ Paid time off for all relevant medical appointments and tests.

WINNING THE CAMPAIGN

1. ENGAGING MEMBERS

Right from the start, tell your members about the campaign and what they can do to get involved. Their support can make all the difference. When the campaign is won, make sure to tell them about it. Getting members involved in the early stages will help you with your evidence gathering, which can be used to persuade the employer to act.

TIPS TO GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT!

- Send an email: a quick and cost-effective way to get your message out and keep members updated. You can share links to Prostate Cancer UK's online risk checker and so much more.
- Put up a campaign poster: on workplace noticeboards, in canteens and meeting rooms. Order a supply of Unite and Prostate Cancer UK's posters, please see useful links below.
- Get talking – ask for a short slot to talk about your Prostate cancer campaign at team meetings, branch meetings, in the canteen or wherever else there's an audience. Invite a speaker from Prostate Cancer UK to join you.

2. MAKING THE CASE

Use the facts and figures about prostate cancer provided in this guide and find more information on the IMPORTANT DATES and USEFUL LINKS page.

Encourage your employer to see this as a positive opportunity to do the right thing, exercise their duty of care for the workplace, at little or no cost. Remind them of the potential cost savings from reducing prolonged sick leave and expensive maintenance costs caused by flushing sanitary products and blocking toilets.

It's not good enough to provide sanitary provision in accessible toilets, as men can feel embarrassed or anxious about using these. This might be because they don't feel they are disabled, or because they are anxious about explaining why they are unable to use the men's facilities.

Make sure the employer understands that the bins need to be of a size to accommodate all forms of sanitary waste like incontinence pads, which are big and bulky.

BUILD YOUR CASE AROUND THE SPECIFIC ISSUES IN YOUR WORKPLACE. FOR EXAMPLE,

- Are there particular times, shifts or job roles where access to toilets is a problem?
- What proportion of the workforce are at higher risk of prostate cancer?

While you won't have figures on family history, you can look at your membership figures for men over 50, and Black men over 45. Also consider targeting women over 50, who can share messaging with the men in their lives.

You can ask the employer for these figures for the workforce as a whole. These figures will help you show how it makes sense for the employer to pre-empt problems.

Relevant legislation includes:

[hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/workplace-facilities/health-safety.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/workplace-facilities/health-safety.htm)

3. BUILDING PRESSURE

Start by making members aware of the campaign.

- ✓ Invite members with stories to tell to be involved.
- ✓ Use anonymised personal stories to bring the issues home to the employer.
- ✓ Consider a short anonymous survey – especially where access to toilets is an issue. Use the results to demonstrate the need to the employer.

Increase the campaign's visibility by running a prostate cancer awareness session onsite or online for members and potential members.

Use the calendar dates listed at the end of this guide to highlight issues in the workplace related to this campaign.

Research good practice among other local companies or other companies in the sector and encourage the employer to keep pace.

Ask for an Equality Audit and/or Equality Impact Assessment regarding toilet provision and male sanitary needs.

4. PUBLICISING THE WIN!

Use the model launch statement in this pack to make sure members and potential members know this is a Unite win. Encourage the employer to see this a good news story for them as well.

IMPORTANT DATES AND USEFUL LINKS

FEBRUARY

4/02: World Cancer Day- www.worldcancerday.org

MARCH

1-31: Prostate Cancer Awareness month. More info at: www.prostatecanceruk.org

JUNE

Father's Day- third Sunday of the month

World Continence Week (WCW) – last full week in June.

Men's Health Week – second full week in June. More info at www.menshealthforum.uk.org

NOVEMBER

1-30 Movember. More info at: <https://uk.movember.com>

19/11: International Men's Day. More info at: www.internationalmensday.com

19/11: World Toilet Day. More info at: www.unitetheunion.org/toilet dignity

PROSTATE CANCER UK RESOURCES (LINKS)

- Prostate cancer; Risk and Symptoms: prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information-and-support/risk-and-symptoms
- Let's talk about incontinence: prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved/campaigning/incontinence
- Lifting the lid on male incontinence (report): <https://tinyurl.com/uk6dk384>

PROSTATE CANCER PUBLICATIONS

Order printed publications or read them online.
Go to shop.prostatecanceruk.org/our-publications

- Search for Awareness Event Bundle and Black Men Awareness Bundle

UNITE RESOURCES

- Unite health screening campaign: unitetheunion.org/screentime
- Unite Equalities calendar: unitetheunion.org/equalities-calendar
- Unite Equalities, disabled members: unitetheunion.org/disabled-members

