

BOSTU Rep Stories

Our Union relies on the hard work of our workplace Reps to provide support and representation to our members.

If you'd like to get involved, contact Sam Aitkenhead for more information TUSecretary@orthoptics.org.uk,

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I have been the TU Rep in our department for several years. This began with face-to-face training with Sam Aitkenhead, then completing the TU Rep handbook. Attending the regular staff-side meetings has given me a much deeper understanding of the Trust in terms of management structure, senior roles, ethos etc. It has also been a great opportunity to meet Reps from other staff groups and gain insight into their working life, as well as meet other BOSTU Reps from the region.

Having a TU Rep has benefited the department as it has helped us with getting roles job-matched to the appropriate band. It gave our department a voice during the pandemic and we were able to offer ideas for staff recognition (e.g. COVID bonus). It has also given us an insight and voice in the making and reviewing of Trust policies.

I would recommend the role to anyone with an interest in a future leadership position and anyone hoping to make a positive impact on staff working conditions through collaboration and/or negotiation with Trust management. I feel well supported in my role both by BOSTU and by my fellow Reps within the Trust.

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I put myself forward as a BOSTU Rep because I wanted our Orthoptists to feel well-supported, protected and motivated at work. In order to train for the role, I completed the Rep induction booklet provided by BOSTU and also had training resources provided by Trade Union Congress (TUC). The regular meetings and support network between other reps also helps you to gain invaluable experience.

In my time as a Rep, I have been able to give Orthoptists the freedom to speak up if they feel they have been treated unfairly or with inequality.

I now feel our Orthoptists are starting to be listened to and understood more ... it's rewarding when you start to see changes being implemented from something that you have initiated.

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I have been a BOSTU Rep for my department for the past 5 years. I became a Rep as my colleagues thought I would be able to listen to and represent members that had problems, and be able to communicate about workplace issues and keep members informed of any changes and developments in the Trust. I believe it is an important role to have in the department to support members, be able to provide advice and guidance with any issues they are having at work, and make the workplace safer.

At first, I was a bit unsure of what was involved and expected from a Rep, but I attended some BOSTU training workshops and had the opportunity to meet other reps with varying levels of experience as a TU Rep.

Since then I have attended regular staff side meetings in my trust, which is a good way to be involved with changes in the Trust and see how decisions are made, and be able to negotiate with employers and feedback to members about changes and how that could affect them. I have also attended national and regional meetings and training events to discuss changes that affect orthoptists and had the opportunity to listen to case studies from other Reps in which they have had to represent members.

I have attended some online webinars to keep updated with training for the role and I have represented members in formal and informal meetings.

As part of my role as a Rep, I also did job matching training and I have been invited and sat on panels for job evaluations within my Trust, which I have enjoyed being part of to see how jobs are banded.

Having a Representative in our department has been beneficial as we have someone to represent and negotiate on behalf of our members and act as a link between the members, employer and the British Orthoptic Society Trade Union.

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My name was initially put forward to be a BOSTU Rep in 2018, because I had always spoken up about what was fair and reasonable work for the department.

I shadowed the previous TU Rep until they retired, and attended BOSTU Rep training. There is also a very useful online introduction to being a rep on the TUC website. In 2021 I was elected as the joint staff side chair for my hospital. I have been involved in negotiating on consultations, staff health and wellbeing and updating policy. I also became the Southern Lead Regional Officer. In this role, I have organised meetings for local Reps to discuss what is happening locally and learn from each other. I also try to answer questions from Reps where possible, with much support from the Executive Board! I have learned a lot about my rights and the rights of those I represent since starting my journey as a Rep. I have always tried to ensure policy change will benefit members, to enable them more support and better work-life balance. By reading the sickness policy in detail, I was able to discover it was being implemented incorrectly. By pushing for the correct implementation, members were able to have a less stressful return to work.

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I have very recently taken on the role of TU Rep so I'm still finding my feet! I wanted to become a Rep to find out more about what happens 'behind the scenes' within Orthoptics and the wider hospital Trust to support union members.

I initially worked through the TU Rep training booklet which was very useful and I have found other Reps to be supportive too. The Staff Side meeting allowed me to find out about a variety of issues affecting certain staff groups, all Trust staff and wider national issues too. The role has allowed me to network with people I wouldn't usually work with, which I have enjoyed. I am looking forward to becoming more involved as I gain more experience within the role.