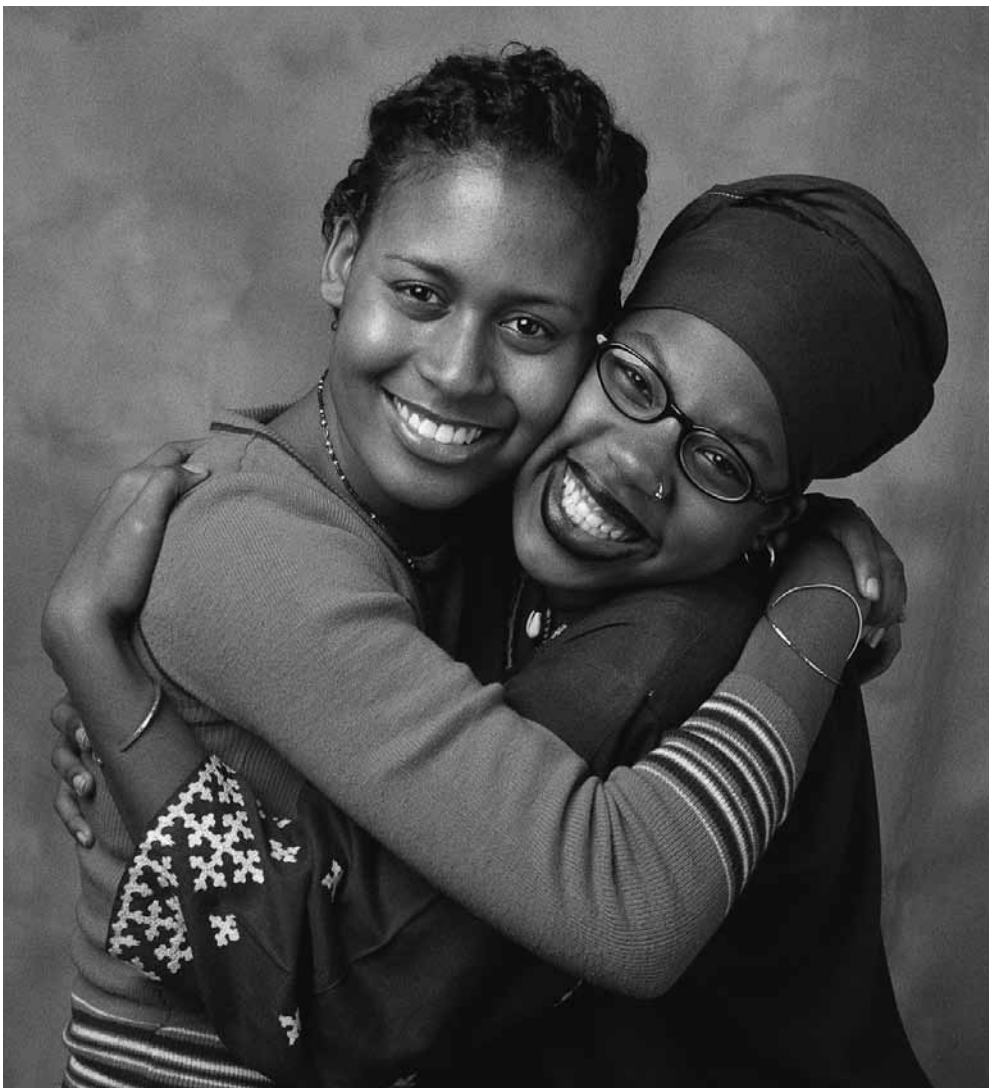


# A guide to equality in UNISON

Updated January 2012



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# Foreword

## “Fairness and equality for all – no ifs, no buts.”

That’s how one UNISON member sums up the importance of equality – and those words represent everything our union stands for.

UNISON members come from all walks of life and all parts of the world. Every one of them is entitled to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. We’re committed to making that happen, and our track record of defending workers’ rights, organising vulnerable workers and tackling prejudice, discrimination and exploitation speaks for itself.

This updated guide shows how we’re working to build equality into everything we do. We’re committed to achieving our vision of a society based on true public service values: equality, co-operation, and democracy.

With public services and public service workers under attack, equality is more important than ever.

No ifs, no buts.

Dave Prentis  
General secretary



# UNISON's equality agenda

UNISON is the UK's leading trade union. Our 1.3 million members work in hospitals, nurseries, schools, care homes and libraries. They are employed in leisure centres, colleges, universities and police stations. They work for community organisations, local authorities, the NHS, key utility companies and public agencies – from the Environment Agency to the Food Standards Agency. Some you see every day, others are less well known. All make a real difference to the quality of people's lives.

Our members' first port of call for advice and support and to get involved is our network of local branches. We have a national centre in London, offices in our 12 regions and UNISONdirect on the end of a phone.

Nationally, regionally and locally, equality is at the heart of UNISON. It's a key element of our work from our local support to individual members to our international campaigns.

For us, equality means:

- recognising that no two people are the same, and appreciating that everyone has an equal right to be treated with dignity and respect
- celebrating our multicultural and diverse society

- meeting people's actual, as opposed to assumed, needs
- understanding that groups of people who face prejudice are stronger through organising together to fight discrimination
- actively developing a skilled and diverse workforce.

Equality initiatives are co-ordinated nationally by the membership participation unit based at the UNISON centre in London, working closely with UNISON's national executive council and equality committees. Every region has equality leads and most local branches have equality co-ordinators.

## Equality for everyone at work, in UNISON and in society

UNISON's goal is fair and equal access to employment and training. People have a right to be treated with dignity and respect at work, to do their job to the best of their ability, free from discrimination and harassment.

Our members work for the public good, tackling disadvantage, extending opportunity and supporting communities. As well as standing for decent pay and

conditions, we campaign for world class public services, readily available to everyone who relies on them and delivered in a way that meets people's real needs.

We lobby for strong and effective equality legislation. We uphold the rights of workers everywhere and play a leading role in the worldwide trade union movement.

## Equality in defence of public services

UNISON is leading the campaign to defend our public services and help create a fairer society. The coalition government is using the costs of the banking crisis as an excuse for cuts and privatisations that are harming communities and making our economic problems worse.

Our million voices campaign gets the message across that there is a better alternative. Equality is at the heart of our million voices campaign and those who already have least are bearing the brunt of the cuts in jobs and services.

We oppose the privatisation of public services in principle. But where privatisation is going ahead, we negotiate the best protection for our members.

## Equality for disabled people at work, in UNISON and in society

Disabled people make up 20% of people of working age but only half of working age disabled people are actually in work. As well as barriers to employment, they are paid less than non disabled people and can be unfairly targeted in redundancy programmes.

UNISON has lobbied hard for equality legislation that protects disabled workers from harassment and discrimination and that requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for disabled workers. We use the law to back up our bargaining for disabled workers rights.

Government cuts to benefits and services will lead to more disabled people living in poverty and social exclusion. Our 'Cuts hurt me' campaign highlights their effect and feeds into our million voices campaign.

The postcode lottery for some treatments is a scandal. We lobby government on disabled people's health issues, including efficient and speedy access to health services.

We've long campaigned for accessible and affordable public transport for disabled people – essential for many disabled workers.

## Equality for women at work, in UNISON and in society

More than two-thirds of UNISON's members are women and we are acutely aware of the disadvantage still facing women workers. Women earn a lot less than men, find it harder to win promotion and many face sex discrimination and harassment at work.

Many women have caring responsibilities and almost half work part-time. UNISON negotiates and campaigns on women's rights at work and in society. We lobby for flexible working and for improved maternity, carers and parental rights. These are essential if women are to achieve equality at work and at home.

We negotiate agreements with employers, in many cases winning more than the legal minimum. We demand good quality, affordable childcare delivered by properly trained and fairly paid childcare workers and public services to support those caring for adult dependants.

Career development opportunities to help women with limited skills improve job and pension prospects are vital. Pension schemes must take into account the fact that many women take career breaks and/or work part-time.

UNISON is committed to ensuring that women are fairly represented at all levels in the union's structures, and in supporting women to achieve fairer representation at senior level in the workplace and in society – including as political decision makers.

Violence against women, be it domestic abuse, rape, prostitution or trafficking is completely unacceptable. UNISON campaigns for changes to the law to bring about the end of violence against women.

## Equality for LGBT people at work, in UNISON and in society

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face prejudice in the UK and persecution in many parts of the world. UNISON demands that LGBT equality is recognised as a human right and as a workplace issue. We take this message to employers, to LGBT people themselves and to our sister unions at home and abroad.

Too often, LGBT harassment and discrimination go unrecognised and unchallenged, so we provide training for workplace reps, support individual members and organise LGBT activists locally and nationally. We negotiate agreements to



give LGBT workers dignity and respect and call for LGBT issues to be built into equality policies, impact assessments and equality objectives.

We understand when sexual orientation issues and trans issues need to be addressed separately but when we organise we know that LGBT members are stronger together. We make sure that our own organisation meets LGBT members' needs, and we've worked for stronger laws.

We've long campaign for public services that meet LGBT people's needs, from schools free of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia to health and social care services that treat LGBT users with respect. We know that services dedicated to LGBT people such as LGBT helplines and youth groups or NHS gender reassignment services, are a lifeline for those who use them. But they don't win popularity contests and are amongst the first to be cut. Equality for LGBT people is part and parcel of our million voices campaign to defend public services.

## Equality for Black people at work, in UNISON and in society

Challenging racism in the workplace is vital to UNISON's work. Racist discrimination prevents Black communities from having equal access to good quality jobs and pay. Black workers are more likely than white colleagues to be disciplined at work, to experience harassment and to work in junior or temporary positions.

UNISON defends the employment rights of Black staff, and works to dismantle barriers to progression and promotion for Black employees.

Without an effective workplace response to deeply rooted patterns of discrimination, many of our members, their families and communities are left vulnerable to blighted life chances and opportunities.

UNISON campaigns for a fairer society that values all its members equally – a society where social justice, good jobs and quality public services come first, not racism, hate and fear. UNISON challenges racist and fascist parties like the BNP both at the ballot box and in the wider community.

UNISON is committed to increasing the representation and participation of Black people within the union.



It is also committed to improving Black people's participation in shaping public services and their representation at all levels of the political system in the UK.

## Equality for young people at work, in UNISON and in society

UNISON believes that all young people need the best support we can offer. We believe they have a right to decent, safe, properly-paid jobs, with the education and training they need to perform them.

UNISON led the successful campaign for the national minimum wage and then for provisions to be extended to cover 16 and 17 year olds and apprentices, albeit on a lower rate. We continue to campaign for an end to age differentials and to increase the rate to a living wage.

We've campaigned against the cuts to education maintenance allowance and the careers service and raised our concerns about the increase in student debt.

Young members are central to our campaign to protect our pensions.

Sixteen year olds can pay taxes, sign up for military service and get married, yet they're not trusted with a vote. UNISON is working with the Votes@16 campaign to reduce the voting age by two years.

## Equality for older people at work, in UNISON and in society

UNISON's aim is decent pay and conditions in every workplace, and good provision for people when their working days are over. We campaign for an end to pensioner poverty and for easily accessible high-quality health care for older people. We fight age discrimination, using the full force of the law when we need to.

## Equality for all

Each of us is an individual and we belong to many groups. Our background and complex identities shape our experiences and needs. In our work on equality, we sometimes have a single focus – for example on young workers or on racism in the workplace. But we also work across equality groups, for example on initiatives for Black LGBT members and for disabled women.



David Mansell



# UNISON equality scheme

Equality is at the very heart of UNISON. We aim to embed equality in everything we do systematically and consistently. Our tailor-made equality scheme gives us the tools to do this. Our first scheme ran from 2008 to 2011; our second scheme runs from 2012-2015.

It is a plan of action for the whole of UNISON, covering the way we organise, our democratic processes, negotiating and bargaining, representing members, policy development, decision-making, services to members and the union's own workforce.

It covers age, disability, gender, gender identity/gender reassignment, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation, as well as low pay. We highlight low pay as an issue that affects many of our members and is central to our work as a trade union. These are the heart of the scheme. Particular pieces of work also address other groups facing discrimination, such as migrant workers. The action plan for UNISON Northern Ireland covers the nine equality strands of Northern Ireland's legislation.

The scheme features an action plan for every national department and UNISON region. The plans focus on specific targets so we can measure progress. We celebrate our equality achievements and share our successes and best practice between branches, regions and the national centre.

Its framework is UNISON's four key objectives.

# Recruiting, organising, representing and retaining members



The more members UNISON has, the greater our influence on employers and our capacity to win the best deals.

We take targeted action to recruit a diverse membership that reflects the communities in which people live and work. We encourage and develop members from all equality groups to become UNISON workplace representatives, supporting their members in local negotiations and individual casework.

A diverse, enthusiastic and active membership makes UNISON tick.

## Starting young

UNISON has developed innovative approaches to recruitment. We prepare people to join a union and become activists before they even start work. We were key supporters of the TUC's Unions Into Schools initiative which brings a curriculum-relevant positive trade union message to school students. We are the only trade union in the

Times 100, a network of influential organisations and companies that feeds workplace issues into secondary schools through imaginative lesson plans. We link up with the National Union of Students to encourage their activists to become active in the wider trade union movement.

## Organising low paid women

UNISON organises and negotiates on behalf of low paid workers, who are primarily women. We campaigned to protect school staff such as teaching assistants, school meals workers and caretakers from the public sector pay freeze. UNISON's *Defend your schools* campaign opposes the creation of academies and community schools where terms and conditions are not subject to national protection and are therefore significantly worse than in traditional state schools.

## Focus on migrant workers

Without the migrant workers who come to the UK from all over the world, many of our public services simply could not function. Migrant workers make an essential contribution to the economy and to society as a whole, but unscrupulous employers can use their limited knowledge of their rights, language barriers and reluctance to complain to exploit them.

UNISON works hard to recruit migrant workers and to get them active and organised in the union. This is essential to address and prevent exploitation.

In Wales, UNISON has piloted pre-employment training for migrant workers and refugees, resulting in an increase in membership levels

Go to [unison.org.uk/migrantworkers](https://unison.org.uk/migrantworkers) for more information, including recruitment material in the languages of the main migrant worker communities.

## Depending on data

We need an accurate profile of our membership to assess whether we're successfully recruiting across the workforce. We continue to upgrade the capacity and accuracy of UNISON's membership database

so that we can collate and analyse the data we need.

Our equality scheme commits us to collect accurate equality monitoring data on members, analysing it against the profile of the local community, and targeting recruitment activities if particular groups are under-represented.

## Fair representation

UNISON's commitment to structures that represent our diverse membership is written into the union's rules. More than 70% of UNISON members are women and our rules state that in elections to committees and delegations, women must be elected in fair proportion to their membership.

Structures should also be representative of part-time and full-time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills, income, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and other factors.

UNISON monitors members attending conferences, committees and training to identify where we need to do more to achieve fair representation and proportionality.

## Self-organisation

UNISON has a strong tradition of self-organisation, bringing together groups of members who may

face prejudice and discrimination: women members, Black members, disabled members and LGBT members. Young members and retired members also work together on issues affecting them.

Self-organised groups (SOGs) meet at national, regional and branch level. They work with other parts of the union to develop and promote the equality agenda. We aim to make their perspectives part-and-parcel of everyday business. They give their members the skills, expertise and confidence to get involved in the wider union. Self-organisation strengthens UNISON.

Our *Organising for Equality* guide explains UNISON's policies on self-organisation and how members can get involved. Read it at [unison.org.uk/equality/organising.asp](http://unison.org.uk/equality/organising.asp).

Young members are not a SOG as such but are a membership group with certain rights in our rules. The same applies to retired members. All UNISON members under 27 – around 70,000 people across the UK – are classed as young members. Young members are vital to the health and strength of any union. By recruiting more of them, we bring down the average age of UNISON members and activists, which benefits us all. So we:

- recruit and organise young workers
- promote the role of the young members' groups

- ensure that young members have a voice in the union
- campaign on issues ranging from the environment to the minimum wage.

We believe our union should reflect society as a whole and we have a thriving retired members' organisation. Retired and working members have a mutual interest in decent incomes for the UK's 10 million older citizens, good care services and keeping the NHS working.

Retired members continue to be entitled to a wide range of benefits provided by UNISONPlus including discounts and added benefits on travel, holidays, insurance, financial advice and much more. Details of these services and offers are always available on the UNISON website.

## Learning and developing

UNISON builds a strong equality dimension into learning and development for activists and staff. We make sure that everyone has equality of access to learning opportunities.

For us, the learning agenda goes beyond individual development, skills for work and building up UNISON branches. It's also about encouraging and enabling members and potential members to engage in their communities and achieving

a fairer and more equal society through learning and political education.

UNISON has a national learning and organising services unit, regional education teams and branch-based union learning reps, who alert members to lifelong learning opportunities and negotiate with employers on learning issues.

## Workplace equality reps

The Equality Act duty on public bodies to promote equality has opened up a range of opportunities for activists to incorporate equality

issues into negotiations with their employer. To meet this, UNISON has developed the role of equality reps, who are based in local workplaces. After a customised training programme, equality reps work with their branch equality co-ordinator and self-organised groups. They work as a team to keep equalities on the branch agenda, support the implementation of UNISON's equality scheme, identify workplace issues and concerns, and work with the employer to achieve equality in the workplace.

The role of workplace equality rep is a particularly good one for new activists.



# Negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members, promoting equality and challenging discrimination

Dignity and respect at work are our goal for every UNISON member. To achieve that, we work hard to negotiate equal pay, fair pay, decent conditions and non-discriminatory pension schemes.

We promote equality and challenge discrimination and harassment in the workplace, using the public sector equality duty and other key legislation to deliver our negotiating and bargaining agenda.

We devote enormous resources to supporting and representing members who have experienced discrimination and harassment.

## Building equality into negotiating and bargaining

We build equality into UNISON's negotiating and bargaining agenda, effectively and appropriately, nationally and locally.

Our bargaining agenda is vast; these examples are typical of our approach.

## Positively part-time

Nearly half of UNISON's members work part-time and far too many of them get a raw deal. The overwhelming majority of part-time workers are women, and the hourly pay rate for part-timers is just 60% of the hourly rate for male full-time workers.

UNISON has had major successes in winning equal rights for part-time workers on pay, shift enhancements, paid bank holidays and pensions.

## Negotiating disability leave

Standard sickness procedures do not meet the needs of some disabled workers, for example people who are newly disabled





or whose condition has changed. UNISON negotiates disability leave that provides disabled employees with reasonable paid time off work for reasons related to their disability.

## Representing transgender members

A 2011 government survey confirmed what we know – that one of the most important challenges facing transgender people is difficulty in gaining and retaining employment and employers' lack of awareness of transgender issues. We make sure that our union reps can combat this lack of awareness with our guide on representing transgender members.

## Domestic abuse

UNISON was one of the first unions to recognise that violence and abuse in the home is a trade union and workplace issue. To help members facing this, we:

- negotiate workplace policies that support and assist workers experiencing domestic abuse
- provide emergency support through UNISON Welfare, a registered charity
- campaign for better services to address the impact of domestic abuse, including training for public service workers.

## Supporting bargaining

Critical to success on these and a host of other issues is the support we offer activists on bargaining for equality. The Bargaining Zone on the UNISON website provides model agreements, the latest bargaining statistics, up-to-date factsheets and bargaining guidance. Find out more at [unison.org.uk/bargaining/equalities.asp](http://unison.org.uk/bargaining/equalities.asp).

## Maximising the potential of the public sector equality duty

More than 90% of UNISON members work for public sector employers, which have a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Implemented effectively, the public sector duty can make a tangible difference to the quality of our members' working lives and the services they deliver. Maximising the potential of the duty is a thread running through UNISON's equality scheme.

UNISON runs courses giving activists and staff an overview of the duty and how to use it locally. We have published detailed guidance on unlocking its potential, regularly

updated, which is on our website. We have developed a protocol on what branches should do if their employer is not meeting the duty.

## Fighting privatisation and job cuts

UNISON is using the equality duty to argue against public authorities putting services into the hands of private contractors - privatisation or outsourcing. Too often, private contractors competing for public sector work put profit above quality and equality.

Private and voluntary sector organisations carrying out public functions must comply with the equality duty when delivering public services. UNISON can use this to ensure that, where services are outsourced, the contractor meets high equality standards. Some authorities involve trade union reps in the tendering process, for example by including them in the panel that interviews organisations bidding for contracts. Others require contractors to adhere to the authority's own equality policies and procedures as a minimum standard.

We use the public sector equality duty to challenge cuts where no thought has been given to how they will affect different groups of workers or service users.

## Race discrimination claims protocol

UNISON's race discrimination claims protocol, established in May 2010, strengthens our work in representing Black members experiencing racism in the workplace. Produced with the help and input of UNISON's national Black members committee, it sets out steps that branches, regions and our union solicitors follow when a member reports that they have been subjected to race discrimination. It aims to ensure that members get the best representation and support that UNISON can offer. It places the emphasis on providing a satisfactory resolution for the member. You can access the protocol on our website.

## Equal pay – a right, not a privilege

Despite 40 years of equal pay legislation, women still lose out to men in their pay packets.

We challenge pay discrimination through negotiation and through legal challenge where necessary. We have represented UNISON members in most of the landmark equal pay cases in the UK and the European Court of Justice. We have won significant pay increases for thousands of low-paid women workers.

In 2010 the Birmingham Employment Tribunal backed UNISON's claim that thousands of women working for Birmingham City Council were entitled to earn the same pay as men working as gardeners, refuse collectors and grave diggers. The women, who worked as cleaners and care assistants, were backed by UNISON in successfully appealing against the council's decision to exclude them

from bonuses paid to men worth up to 160% of their basic pay.

This is just one example. Many equal pay claims are fiercely contested by employers and only resolved on appeal. The volume and complexity of this litigation is unprecedented. UNISON will keep up the pressure and continue to lobby and campaign for stronger equal pay law.

## Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members

UNISON leads the way in campaigning for equality in the workplace and in the wider world. Speaking on behalf of our 1.3 million members, we make the case for quality public services that meet the needs of the whole community, and campaign to end discrimination and harassment at work.

We use our strength to lobby for stronger laws and to ensure that employers meet their legal obligations.

### A million voices for public services

Our number one campaign is to defend public services and public service workers. There is a strong equality dimension to this.

Public sector cuts hit women hard. They are the primary users and the majority of employees in the public sector – as many as 75% of public sector workers are women. When care services are cut, women step in to fill the gap. When childcare



and after-school services are cut, women have to find and fund alternatives. We work to ensure that people understand that the cuts are not fair, and that women, once again, are paying the price of economic failure.

Black workers play an important role in delivering public services, accounting for around 8% of the public sector workforce. But they are concentrated in lower-paying jobs and disproportionately affected by cuts to public services. It has been estimated that addressing the under-achievement of Black boys and young men could save the UK economy £24bn over fifty years.

Disabled people rely on public services to help them live productive and independent lives. Many also work delivering public services. We campaign for recognition of the false economy of cuts to services that result in short term monetary savings but much greater long term costs.

The public and community sector has been the employer of choice for many LGBT people, seeking to avoid discrimination. Bullying tends to increase in the face of reorganisation and redundancies but LGBT workers fear to complain when their jobs are at risk. We work through LGBT community channels to explain to LGBT workers why they need to be in the union, now more than ever.

Services supporting young people are being cut, while youth unemployment rises. Young people have little in the way of a political voice but in UNISON we speak with one voice for all our members. We believe that in the current climate, job opportunities and services should be expanded, not collapsed.

As our population ages, more and more people will need care. Yet 90% of the care sector has been privatised since the 1990s and large private care providers are subject to speculative takeovers. The home care sector struggles to provide services of sufficiently high quality. UNISON campaigns for a fair funding system and investment in the workforce so care workers receive a living wage, proper training and career progression.

## Spotlight on equality

Many UNISON campaigns have a strong equality focus. We have been at the forefront of campaigns for equal pay, for rights at work for same-sex partners and for proper protection for disabled workers.

UNISON believes that it is important that our members have the skills and resources to lobby those in decision-making roles so their voices are heard. Through our political education project, we provide training and resources for this. We also encourage members to become involved in



their communities and politics at all levels – whether as a school governor, a local councillor or even a parliamentary candidate.

When government or employers consult on new legislation, policies and initiatives that affect UNISON members, we speak out. We lobby ministers, respond to consultations, commission new research and thinking, take part in media debates and press for public services with equality at the core.

UNISON's intervention is crucial. Our responses to consultations on maternity provisions and partner support leave led to significant improvements in leave and pay for women on maternity leave and the right for all carers to request flexible working arrangements.

In Northern Ireland, UNISON's equality wins include the introduction of equality and human rights evaluations in decisions on the location and relocation of public sector jobs.

People joining our union in England, Scotland and Wales can opt in to UNISON Labour Link and the General Political Fund (GPF). Labour Link promotes the interests of UNISON within the Labour Party. The GPF supports UNISON's local and national campaigning and is not affiliated to any political party.

Labour Link's focus in parliament is lobbying on legislation, defending

public services and emphasising the need for fair public sector pay and pensions.

The GPF supports campaigns that get our equality and pro-public services messages out to the public and to opinion formers.

## Speaking up against racism

When times are tough we need good public services more than ever. Our world class public services rely on people of all different races, religions and background to deliver them. With cuts to public services and economic anxiety on the rise, it is all too easy for the scapegoating of vulnerable people to damage and divide our communities. Leaflets on tackling racism within the workplace and in the wider community have been produced as part of UNISON's million voices campaign. They are designed to support members and activists start discussions and be confident in challenging racist myths.

The leaflets focus on challenging racist myths and lies; speaking up against Islamophobia; challenging racism; and speaking up for the whole community. They can be ordered from UNISON communications or downloaded from our website.

## Tackling the far right

UNISON works closely with Searchlight and Hope not Hate on challenging the myths and lies of the far right. In pre-election periods, we target areas where the BNP has been active – reducing their councillor base substantially. We distribute anti-fascist materials to UNISON members and – most importantly – talk to them in workplaces about why we oppose the far right.

## Equality round the year

UNISON supports equality events across the UK and around the year, getting our pro-public services messages out to as many people as possible. We have a vibrant presence at Mela festivals, LGBT pride events, carnivals like the world famous one in Notting Hill and the Liberty and DaDa disability rights festivals. Members organise initiatives to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT History Month, International Women's Day, National Slavery Memorial Day, Black History Month, Transgender Remembrance Day and Human Rights Day, to name just a few.

## Strength in partnership

Workers joining UNISON reap the benefit of strength in numbers – our million-plus membership gives us the clout to win a better deal in the

workplace. Working with partners makes us stronger still.

UNISON is a leading affiliate of the Trades Union Congress and Irish Congress of Trade Unions. We play a key part in international union bodies, including the European TUC and our global body Public Services International.

We are in networks and run projects with organisations like the Equality and Diversity Forum, the Fawcett Society, Hope not Hate, Gender Identity Research and Education Society, Show Racism the Red Card, National Pensioners Convention and British Institute for Human Rights.



Jess Hurd



# Developing an efficient and effective union

In order to deliver high-quality services and support for our members, we have to ensure that our structures and organisation are as professional, efficient and effective as possible.

Equality is key. Being a modern trade union means ensuring that colleagues and committees have sound guidance on equality, improving the management, development and diversity of staff and maintaining our Investors in People status.

## Membership participation unit

The membership participation unit (MPU) based in UNISON's national centre provides equality information and advice to the national executive council, equality committees and UNISON staff. The unit works closely with colleagues to develop organising, negotiating, campaigning and legal guidance. It has a co-ordinating role in UNISON's equality scheme.

MPU works directly with the self-organised groups, young members and retired members, supporting their national committees and conferences. The unit also supports the organisation of these groups in regions and branches, encouraging recruitment, organising, support for bargaining and campaigning.

Complementing the work of MPU, all our regions have expert staff with an equality remit.

## Access all areas

UNISON believes that all too often society is organised in a way that creates barriers to inclusion and prevents disabled people from taking a full part in life. This is called the social model of disability.

We want UNISON to embody best practice on disability equality, based on the social model, which means challenging and dismantling any barriers to disabled people's full participation. We work hard to make communications, meetings,

events, conferences and information accessible and inclusive. We aim to use only buildings that provide easy access and facilities for disabled people, offer information in a range of formats, and use plain English.

## Investing in people

Investors in People (IiP) is a national quality standard that provides a best practice framework for improving an organisation's performance through its people. In July 2007, UNISON became the first major UK trade union to win IiP status. In 2010 we were re-accredited with a bronze award over and above the basic standard.

UNISON was awarded the IiP standard because its 1,200 staff were clear about the union's objectives – not least its equality objectives – and how their work helps to achieve them.

## Increasing the diversity of UNISON staff

We seek to be a best practice employer and for us that means employing a workforce that is as diverse as the population. A project focusing on women doubled the percentage of female regional officers, and good progress has been made on targets to address under-representation of Black staff at certain levels and locations.

Work continues to develop existing staff and, in particular, to increase the number of Black staff in management and organising roles.

## Tailoring services to a diverse membership

The “one size fits all” approach to delivering services doesn't work, either in public services or in UNISON itself. Our services need to be accessible, inclusive and, where necessary, tailored to the needs of particular groups of members.

The reality of public service work means that many of our members are low paid, and holidays don't come cheap. Croyde Bay holiday village, owned and operated by UNISON, runs a scheme offering holidays at 50% discount for low-paid members. One member's comments sum up the benefits for hundreds of satisfied customers: “I could never have come on holiday without this offer. My children had a fantastic time, loved every minute. The staff were amazing.”

It's important for us that all of UNISON members are satisfied with service delivery. We surveyed 5,000 Black members and found out that 40% of them were not aware that UNISON offered services such as discounted insurance and great mortgage deals. A communications programme to alert Black members to the services was put in place.

## In confidence

Many of our LGBT members are proud to be out at work and in our union but, for various reasons, some keep this side of their life to themselves. We understand the importance of confidential access to services and communications for LGBT members. UNISON's LGBT

correspondence is clearly marked 'personal'. There are ways members can attend regional or national LGBT meetings without having to be out in their branch. And secure systems are in place to protect the confidentiality of trans members if they transition while they are in UNISON membership.



Paul Box



Foy Peters

## Getting involved

Want to get involved in UNISON's equality work? Here's how:

- Visit UNISON's equality webpages at [unison.org.uk/equality/index.asp](http://unison.org.uk/equality/index.asp). You'll find general equality news and information, individual pages on equality for women, Black, disabled, LGBT, young and retired members, and you can sign up for our regular equality e-bulletins.
- Ask your branch if you can attend a UNISON training course, such as assertiveness training, tackling bullying or using the public sector equality duty.
- Make contact with your branch to find out what's happening on equality in your workplace.
- Go along to branch meetings.
- Join a local self-organised group, young members' forum or retired members' group. If there isn't one in your branch, why not think about setting one up. Alternatively, get involved in a regional group.
- Become an equality rep – it's an ideal role for people new to activism.
- Ask your branch to nominate you to attend regional and national events for your work group.

If you aren't sure which branch or region you belong to, find out by ringing UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845 (textphone 0800 0 967 968), or emailing [direct@unison.co.uk](mailto:direct@unison.co.uk).









This document is also available in large print, Braille and other formats: contact [equality@unison.co.uk](mailto:equality@unison.co.uk) or UNISON Means Equality, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY.

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