

# Proud to be in UNISON

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UNISON national lesbian, gay,  
bisexual and transgender committee

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Annual Report 2015

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#ULGBT15



















































working to deliver Bolton's first pride event at which we will have a strong presence. We were however saddened to hear that Liverpool Pride had to scale back its plans but we responded with support including from local branches to help ensure a successful pride took place in the city including the 'Pride at the Pictures' lorry showing the best of LGBT cinema and screening our UNISON advertisement before each film.

We continued our work with BUFF the national trans masculine event, held during the Sparkle weekend, helping them to raise over £1000 for the MORF Binder Scheme.

At a national level we have been working with other national LGBT committee reps to take forward the work plan. As result of our success in the recruitment and organising awards we were proud to have been asked to develop some guidance for future applicants.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the regional LGBT group members, regional staff and our national officers for all of their support throughout the year.

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## **Scotland**

Our committee is made up of 5 male and 5 female members and again, all sectors are represented. We are elected at our AGM which takes place in October. We meet four times a year. All of our members are active branch stewards and we ensure all equality issues are mainstreamed in our branches and on the local, regional and national bodies we sit on. We fill all the reserved LGBT seats on regional committees such as International, Learning & Organising and Communications & Campaigns.

Recruitment has again been our biggest priority this year and we attended pride in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Pride Glasgow this year was held over two days and as well as taking part in the march, we had a stall for the duration.

We attended the STUC LGBT Workers Conference in May which was very well attended. This is the fourth annual conference and it is growing in size each year. There was a wide range of motions and the debates were lively. We submitted two motions which were passed. There were excellent guest speakers and an interesting range of workshops to attend. We now have two representatives on the STUC LGBT Steering Committee.

Some branches have approached us for help in setting up local LGBT self-organised groups. We organised the first meeting which was open to all members to attend. Whilst not particularly well-attended, we hope to continue with these meetings.

This year we were invited to be a sponsor at the first ever LGBTI awards hosted by the Equality Network. This is being held in Glasgow on 10<sup>th</sup> September and looks to be a very exciting event. There will be 150 guests reflecting the broad range of awards on offer, from LGBTI student and staff groups to politicians, the media, representatives of business and individuals from across Scotland and beyond.

We will be presenting an award, have a presence on the judging panel and will have a stall at the event. This will be a unique opportunity to showcase UNISON and our commitment to equality to leaders from the social and political arena and to the media and wider public.

Four delegates from the committee will be attending the ILGA Europe conference in Athens in October.



## **South East**

UNISON South East LGBT has maintained a large presence for a small group.

Emily Brothers – Labour parliamentary candidate for Sutton and Cheam, who came third in the general election, and Labour’s first transgender Westminster candidate - spoke at our AGM in January. Emily was an inspirational speaker – blind and recently publicly came out in Pink News as transsexual. Emily told us how 10,000 people petitioned against the Sun that ran a column stating ‘how could Emily know she was transsexual if she was blind’. Our very own Carola Towle – national LGBT officer - then spoke on all things UNISON LGBT.

In February as part of LGBT History Month, the group joined an MP’s reception with Tristram Hunt MP, who is campaigning against anti-LGBT bullying in schools.

Since our well attended AGM this year we have followed through by engaging with our members and the larger public within and outside UNISON. We have a small committee and the group elected representatives to the main regional committees, making sure that LGBT issues have a voice in regional policy and activity.

The regional group attended and funded this year’s prides throughout the region, on the parades and running a UNISON stall at Oxford and Reading prides and joining the parade at Kent Pride (Margate).

At Portsmouth Pride, Portsmouth local government branch joined the parade and ran a UNISON stall, and at Brighton Pride, Lewes Local Government Branch had a ‘big bus’ UNISON float. In recognition of their work, both these branch LGBT groups have been nominated for this year’s organising and best photo awards.

The regional group is affiliated to ILGA, the international LGBTI association, East Kent LGBT Network, UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG) and Broken Rainbow.

We publicise our activity by regular emails to signed up UNISON members and through the South East UNISON website. By these methods we hope to reengage with members in the South East and ensure that every part of LGBT is active in our group and in what we do.

The housing crisis that the LGBT community face is central to our campaigning and we are tabling a motion on the housing crisis faced by LGBT members at this year’s UNISON national LGBT conference. We also have a motion on survivor pensions to end the LGBT discrimination in public sector pensions.

The group successfully campaigned against UKIP, in the run up to the general election, throughout the region. We also joined forces with the successful ‘Stand up to UKIP’ campaign ensuring that Nigel Farage was not elected in South Thanet – East Kent.

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## **South West**

This has been a busy year for LGBT activists in the South West. In the run up to the general election our activists were out and about supporting Labour parliamentary candidates. In the months that followed, we organised, contributed to and celebrated at twelve pride events and two diversity festivals. Despite dwindling numbers at our meetings, activists around the region have tirelessly sustained our objectives regarding

capacity building, 'UNISON' brand raising awareness and recruitment and engagement with under-represented groups.

We regularly send information out to all 96 branches using existing publicity materials. This included the invitation to the open meeting for members born with Intersex conditions as well as reminders for our members who identify in the LGBT caucus groups of the network days. The new bi and trans leaflets have been visible and well received at all our events. An important part of the South West committee's work is to continue being Out, Loud and Proud in all six counties of our region. We continue working with UNISON young members, LGBT Labour and the local Labour constituency parties. We have had good support from members of the other SOG groups as well as several branches volunteering with us and for us, to swell UNISON visibility.

The regional LGBT website has been redesigned and has updated information regarding contact details and relevant links to the national website. Our facebook page goes from strength to strength with our 'likes' creeping up. A problem that remains is the practice of gate keeping – less than half the branches in the South West have sent members to a SOG conference in recent years. Self organisation is the life blood of our union and we are determined to promote this empowering concept whenever we can.

We actively participate on all regional committees. A number of LGBT activists hold branch officer posts and we now have representatives from all service groups except WET. We took part in a SOG forum at the regional women's conference highlighting the continued need for LGBT self-organisation, and ran a workshop on international solidarity initiatives.

The regional group remains affiliated to ILGA. We continue to ask for donations in exchange for lanyards and ILGA maps in order to give financial support for ILGA's scholarship programme and Diversity fund. This is a vital part of our work around solidarity with other LGBT groups. We used the various pride and equality events as a platform to highlight whole UNISON campaigns, to recruit under-represented groups, and to raise awareness around LGBT inequality around the world, including handing out the postcards highlighting 'No Pride in Israeli Apartheid'.

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## **West Midlands**

Yet again, the past year has been very busy for the West Midlands SOG. We have welcomed Claire to our regional team, and thank Luke and Katrina for their commitment to our union, as they will be stepping down this year from National Committee.

As previous in years, we have attended prides across our region. At this year's Birmingham Pride, UNISON helped organise the trade union block, with over 250 members from 15 unions leading the parade through the city streets. At Stoke on Trent Pride, we were joined by the local branch, holding a joint stall. We attended Walsall and Wolverhampton prides; also in our region Coventry City branch SOG supported its city pride.

In February we supported a school outreach programme, to coincide with LGBT history month, and plan a similar event this coming year in Bromsgrove. For the first time our

SOG has sent a delegate to BiCon, and hope this can become a regular fixture within our regional calendar.

Our conveners continue to play a active role in our region, attending regional council and committee. We try to foster links with other SOGs, forums and committees. Earlier in the year Bob and Rory took the National LGBT banner to Burford in Oxfordshire, taking part in the Levellers Day events.

Over the last 12 months at least 5 branch SOGs have been formed, and our regional SOG is developing into an “umbrella” group, sharing ideas and supporting members and LGBT officers.

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## **Yorkshire and Humberside**

Once again this year for the Yorkshire/Humber region has been very slow. The first meeting of the cycle of meetings after the AGM was well attended but again things went downhill from then on with low attendance and cancelled training events.

This regional group did intend to have a float in Leeds Pride but due to circumstances beyond our control the float was not available.

On a more positive note the SOG did have a presence at Wakefield Pride where UNISON was one of the sponsors of the event and also at Hull Pride.

There will also be a regional presence at Barnsley Pride which takes place on the 6 September. It is difficult to ascertain if we were successful in any of our recruitment campaigns at these pride events. Recruiting new members into the self organised group or into the union is a difficult job at the best of times. The group has not had any recruitment initiatives that have been targeted at Black, disabled, and young LGBT workers and bi and trans workers, just campaigns to recruit members into UNISON per se.

The regional SOG does not have any caucuses and does not use social media.

The regional group has not implemented any of the conference decisions from the last year as its main priority has been to try and rebuild the SOG. This is difficult work but we are making slow progress.

The regional group is represented on the Yorkshire/Humber regional committee, regional council and at regional service groups.

The main problem for the group is committed attendance. We seem to start well but as the year goes on attendance levels fall thus leading to cancelled meetings and training events. Our aim this year is to continue to rebuild the SOG and have committee members attending all meetings this year so that none are cancelled.

The next meeting of the regional SOG will be the AGM on the 7 November 2015.

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