

Putting politics back in to Pride



A UNISON practical guide to organising for
Pride

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Introduction

This guide has been developed following the North West Regional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Groups motion to National LGBT Conference in 2014 which called upon Regional and Branch LGBT groups to put politics back into Pride.

History of Pride

Pride started as a protest. The parades and marches that we see now come from the protest marches of the first prides. LGBT people and their friends marched because it was commonplace for people to think that LGBT people shouldn't be seen or heard and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia was endemic, so in protest against this, they demonstrated!

In 1970, a few brave people marched through London in response to the 1969 Stonewall riots, in New York. Prides are commemorations of those Riots, which helped create an LGBT movement.

UK pride events have come a long way. In 2015, the parade in London numbered tens of thousands, with hundreds of thousands watching. And London is no longer the biggest UK pride. Over 70 events have already taken place this year, including the well known ones and some that are more niche! But it's not all good.

Pride is still about visibility but sometimes the protest can be lost amongst the outfits, the corporate sponsorship, the alcohol and the rest. UNISON supports many prides, sometimes to help them get off the ground, but always to demonstrate our commitment to LGBT equality and usually in order to recruit lots of new members. We can have mixed success.

Our profile and influence at the big events can't compete with the Starbucks, the Barclays and the Tesco's, if it's cash that does the talking. And where crowd control, pricey entrance tickets or just sheer noise and numbers keep people away from our UNISON stalls, we can't have those vital recruitment conversations. It is fair to say that politics has all but disappeared from some prides but not all.

TUC-led union and community discussions about the principles for organising pride events, concluded:

- Pride should try to provide for everyone's interests, but the march is the core part;
- It should be a celebration of our community and achievements and an affirmation of our visibility;
- It should reflect our history of campaigning for liberation and the reality that full equality is yet to be achieved;
- Pride must be free, open and accessible to all parts of our community, particularly disabled people;
- The direction, form and content must be determined by LGBTQ people themselves, who will, in turn, be accountable to the LGBTQ communities; and
- Pride must be run on a not-for-profit basis.

Planning and Resources

It is wise to **plan in advance** for the Pride events your Regional and/or Branch LGBT Self Organised Group (SOG) intend to participate in or hold.

Many of us enthusiastically want to try to be involved in everything, but it's important that you are **realistic** with the resources you have available both in terms of people and budget.

It is often useful to **hold a planning session** with your Regional/Branch LGBT SOG at the beginning of the year, so that everyone can be involved in the decision making of which Prides to participate in and to **gauge the appetite of your activists** to give up the hours it will take in preparation and on the actual day.

Some Regional LGBT Groups have established "**Sub-Regional**" or "**Area**" **Organising Roles** on their committee. These seats often take a co-ordinating role when it comes to the practical arrangements around pride events.

It's important to stress that they will still need support from the wider membership on the day but they will usually be the principle point of contact with the organisers and will circulate information to members and branches; including details of setup arrangements and a rota for the stall.

SAMPLE ROLE DESCRIPTION: SUB REGIONAL ORGANISER

- To Deputise for the Co-convenors at both internal and external events;
- To contribute to the development of the annual Regional SOG Committee Action Plan and General Political Fund Bid;
- To co-ordinate recruitment and campaigning activities within the sub-regions as outlined in the Regional SOG Committee Action Plan, particularly at Pride and other events;
- To liaising with Branches and other organisations in order to widening participation of UNISON members in Pride and other activities within the sub-regions;
- Work with Branches within the sub-regional area in developing Self Organised Groups and their negotiating and bargaining activities regarding equality as appropriate;
- To recruit and organise a team of activists to support the sub-regional work which has due regard to proportionality; and
- To provide regular reports to the committee and produce a written Annual Report for the AGM.

Another important reason for planning in advance is to ensure that you meet the deadline for submitting your **General Political Fund** Application.

Application Forms and the deadline are circulated in advance via the National LGBT Officer.

If events come up after the deadline, don't worry you can submit a **regional pool bid** or seek **financial and organising support from local branches**.

Making Prides Political

Most Pride's will have an organising committee; hold an annual general meeting; or hold involvement/listening events, these are a fantastic way of making sure our members voices are heard.

Don't be put off if your local pride doesn't do these sorts of activities, pick up the phone or drop them a line. Most organisations like our own depend upon volunteers and they will usually be keen to collaborate. It can also be useful to co-ordinate with other trade unions to show our collective strength, like UNISON the TUC organises in regions and many of these have active TUC LGBT networks.

It's good to think about what you want to **ask of them and what you can offer**, this could be as simple as wanting to:

- ✓ march alongside other trade unions and the labour movement in the pride march;
- ✓ hold a political fringe event as part of the pride programme;
- ✓ Suggest a political speaker aligned with one of our campaigns;
- ✓ Making sure prides are inclusive and have something for LGBT families; and
- ✓ Seek opportunities to maximise our visibility at these events.

Below is an example of partnership work with a focus on making Pride political:

MANCHESTER PRIDE: JOINT WORKING WITH LGBT LABOUR & THE TUC

The Regional LGBT Committee worked with the North West TUC and LGBT Labour to host a series of political fringe events in the run up to Manchester Pride.

Our Labour Link Officer co-ordinated and chaired a political debate "Forty Years On: continuing the Labour fight for LGBT equality - home and away" on the opening night of Pride. Guest speakers included Emily Brothers (first openly trans candidate to run for Westminster), Paul Fairweather (former Labour Councillor), - Prossy Kakooza (Lesbian Immigration Support Group), and Stephen Twigg (MP).

We worked with the TUC to host Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners on the Pride March leading the UNISON entry, sharing our recruitment and campaigning stall at the Pride Expo and co-ordinating a film screening of the hit 2014 film 'Pride' at the LGBT Foundation, followed by a Q&A session with members of LGSM. All events were incredibly well attended.



Taking on the far-right and UKIP

UNISON has a well established policy on taking on the far-right. As part of this work, UNISON has long since included information on tackling the far-right on our Pride stalls including carrying Hope Not Hate materials.

More recently, UKIP has thrown itself into the mix, seeking to take part in Pride events across the country. At first it seemed unlikely, given the well-documented anti-LGBT attitudes of many leading UKIP members. But we should not be surprised. LGBT people really are everywhere.

Last year, UNISON West Midlands group was horrified to find a UKIP stall at Wolverhampton Pride, where UNISON was a main sponsor. This year, our North West group had successful discussions with Manchester pride about UKIP participation there. As for this year's London pride, the issue rumbles on. First UKIP was listed as a marching group - next to LGBT Labour! Then the board decided to reject their application. On the day, despite assurances they would respect the board's decision, a small UKIP contingent joined the march (not that we noticed them – the trade union section was far too big, loud and joyous!).

So we need to firm up the principles. And we need to make sure that where UNISON is supporting pride events, we make it a condition that all participating groups sign up to shared values.

But these principles and values need to go beyond acceptance and inclusion. It's not a matter of mere tolerance. They must include a commitment to equality, justice and human rights, including trade union rights, and to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers seeking safe haven in the UK from anti-LGBT persecution. Statements from any group, its leaders or representatives which deny or contradict these values and principles must be grounds for exclusion from pride.

We need principles that make us proud. It's important that we share these principles with Pride organisers with a view to negotiating them being adopted.

The National LGBT Committee regularly shares updates regarding these types of developments and in particular details of where these campaigns have been won.

If you are unsure or wish to seek further guidance or advice contact the National LGBT Officer who will be happy to assist or put you in contact with others campaigning for similar agreements with Pride organisers.

Running and starting up new Pride events

Pride events don't have to be a large scale affair, if you are organising a brand new Pride, it is probably wise to think small to start with, such as a picnic, film screening, or small "market place" event. Prides should be judged on what they do in line with our shared principles (see page 2) and not the size of the event itself. Small events can have a real impact.

Here is a Pride event checklist of key things to consider:

✓ **Location and date**

Think about the venue, look for accessible public buildings which are often cheaper than commercial ones, also consider what other events are taking place, try to avoid other Prides already scheduled to take place in the region.

✓ **Establishing an organising team**

You will need a core group of people who are prepared to give up enough time and energy to setup your event, this might be UNISON activists or possibly another local LGBT organisation willing to partner up who share our values.

✓ **Funding**

Pride events cost money. You could consider making a GPF application (see page 3) and/or seek donations from branches, other trade unions and community organisations. You may need to consider direct fundraising such as a bake sale or raffle. Consider what you can get for free, such as venues or local performers.

✓ **Community engagement and public support**

Speak with local LGBT Groups, trade unions, student unions, LGBT venues and the council when you are considering setting up an event, it is essential that you gain their support if your Pride event is to be a success. Ask them if they can dedicate some time to help plan and organise an event, this will help build ownership of it within the community. Consider holding a public meeting to get individual members of the public engaged and talk to the local press on how they can help get the word out.

Here are a few examples to give you some ideas on how to get a local Pride event of the ground:

FILM SCREENINGS OF "PRIDE"

The North West LGBT SOG organised a series of film screenings of the 2014 hit film "Pride" at various community venues over the last 12 months each varying in size, including one during the TUC Conference in Liverpool which saw a packed auditorium with guest speakers; to small screenings in local libraries to much smaller audiences. These events have been great for recruiting new members into UNISON.



BOLTON'S FIRST PRIDE

Bolton saw a spike in homophobic hate crime, which led a small group of individuals setting about developing a community Pride. UNISON Bolton Branch and the Regional LGBT Group worked with the organisers to enable a wide range of events in the town including a dinner; sponsoring their "family day"; cultural events and a candlelit vigil. A relatively small amount of money went a long way and enabled UNISON to be seen as a core partner.

Recruitment and Campaigning

It's important to think about your pride stall in advance, you might want to consider asking yourself:

- What do you plan to achieve through your presence?
- How will you attract people to your stall?
- How will you recruit members and activists?
- What materials will you have on your stall?
- What campaigns will you be highlighting and how will you do this?

LGBT UNISON activists attend many events around the country and some of the activists involved will have less experience than branch stewards when it comes to recruiting. Below are some tips and a process on how to engage potential members at events.

Engaging people with your stall

Having something interactive is key, anything that stops them from walking by. Current petitions are a great way to do this: simply stopping someone and saying "Will you add your voice to our million voices campaign speaking up for public services?" should work. The ILGA maps are another great conversation starter. This is enough to engage most people and never be surprised at how many people will quite happily sign up.

“TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE”: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC THROUGH OUR CAMPAIGNS

In the lead up to the Sochi Winter Olympics, the North West Regional LGBT Committee prioritised a campaign to raise awareness of the draconian anti-LGBT laws passed in Russia through their stall at Manchester Pride.

They created an interactive space, with information on the current inequality faced by LGBT people in the country and an opportunity for members of the public to write messages of solidarity on “To Russia with Love” postcards.

This created a real buzz around the UNISON stall, enabling those all-important recruitment discussions to take place.



Recruitment is an essential part of holding any stall at Pride, it is important to think about the training needs of your activists volunteering on your stall.

- Are they confident in speaking to the public;
- Do they have the recruitment skills needed;
- Who can we recruit (students, service groups, etc);
- Encouraging them to sign-up on the spot.

It's important to consider what you can do to support this, either through shadowing, recruitment training, briefing at the start of the day, handing out a factsheet, etc.

Gathering information

Well now you've got them happily signing away you can begin to wean out potential members from those who are not be eligible to join UNISON.

Ask whether they work in the public sector. The '*What is a Trade Union*' leaflet (stock no 3049 or download from online catalogue) is really good at explaining to those who don't know what they are and they are always great to have with you at events you attend.

Promoting membership

If they are eligible to be a member but are not one currently give them some of your personal experience of why you joined a union. There are lots of good reasons on the join pages of the UNISON website joinunison.org. Remember, people would rather hear from a real person on why they joined UNISON. Explain to them all the good things we do protecting members in work but don't forget the lobbying work we do and our international work. There is no one magic phrase you can say to people to get them to join but genuine personal reasons rather than a rehearsed sales patter work best.

They may not wish to fill in an application form there and then but they are more likely to join if you give them one and/or the details of how to join than if they leave with nothing. So make sure you give them a form, the web address of how to join online or the freephone joining number **0800 171 2194**. Try not to feel disappointed if people leave without joining. You may just have given somebody the nudge to join in the workplace or online.

ON THE DAY ONLINE RECRUITMENT

The North West Regional LGBT SOG observed an organisation at Manchester Pride a few years ago asking members of the public to complete a 45 minute online survey using i-Pad technology. People seemed to be drawn to the devices, with large crowds waiting their turn.



The following year the group decided to trial the use of tablet devices for online recruitment and mailing list subscriptions. They borrowed several i-Pads from the Regional Education Team and bought a £50 pay-as-you-go mobile data hub from the local supermarket to overcome any connectivity issues. The response was phenomenal, with dozens of people signing up over the bank holiday weekend to become members and joining our mailing list. This method has now become a staple of their recruitment strategy at Prides.

Existing members

Also don't forget about those people who said they were already members. Give them the details of you next SOG meeting. If possible take their details so you that you region can add them to the SOG's mailing list. Remind them about important events coming up like marches, conference and important campaigns; encourage them to become active in the SOG. It's not just about recruiting new members; it is also about encouraging more activists from our existing members too.

UNISON recruitment flow diagram

Build Rapport

- Million voices bubble invitation/ILGA map
- Sign up to a campaign action or activity
- Ask about how they are finding Pride, the weather or anything else....

Gain Information (are they eligible to join UNISON?)

- Where do you work?
- Do you work in the public sector?
- What sort of work do you do?

You may be able to gather this from activity at stage 1.

Eligible for UNISON

- Are you in a union?

Not Eligible for UNISON

- Are you in a union?

No / not any more

Do you know what a union can do for you?

List benefits of union membership:

- Representation;
- Negotiation; and
- UNISON Plus.

Would you consider joining?

Yes, not UNISON

Give information on public campaigns and UNISON's work in sector and UNISON's focus on LGBT issues.

Yes, in UNISON

Offer national LGBT mailing list, encourage them to join regional mailing.

Have you attended local SOG / national LGBT conference?

No

Suggest benefits of union membership

Give information as to sister unions and public campaigns

Yes

Give info on public campaigns

No / not at moment

Why is that?

Seek to handle objections – push benefits. Always leave them with joining information.

Yes

Encourage them to sign up today / offer incentive (e.g. free t shirt for people signing up today).

Signed up today

Welcome them to UNISON. Tell them what happens next.

Not signed up today

Leave with sign up form. Reiterate benefits. Take contact details and follow up.

Maximising our visibility and participation of members

It is essential that we utilise every opportunity to maximise our visibility at Pride events, so that the public, potential and existing members can see our commitment to LGBT equality in the workplace and wider society.

This can be achieved by:

- ✓ Identifying opportunities to maximise UNISON's presence, this can be as simple as sponsoring signs for a particular aspect of the event, but requesting our logo appears on them;
- ✓ Take part in the Pride march/parade, use UNISON flags, placards, book the national banner, encourage branches to participate – asking them to come along with their branch banner;
- ✓ Use Pull-up Banners on your stall – these help to dress your stall and provide a strong visual presence; and
- ✓ Look at the merchandise which has maximum impact – rainbow lanyards which people will wear at work; re-usable bags with prominent unison logo; ensure all merchandise has joining details on them or a link to our website/Facebook, etc.

MAXIMISING OUR VISABILITY AT SPARKLE AND BUFF

As the major sponsors of BUFF the trans masculine celebration which runs alongside Sparkle, we supported the delivery of a range of events in particular supporting their pub quiz on the Saturday night and their presence in the park as part of Sparkle. This included sponsorship of pop-up banners for BUFF and MORF which had our logo emblazoned upon them which were on display throughout the weekend. We also sponsored a series of posters and flyers to promote the events with our logo included on them demonstrating our support.

UNISON members assisted with the BUFF cake stall, both by baking and by selling cakes around Canal Street wearing our branded t-shirts further raising our profile.

Our regional Trans Members Officer and a member of the National Committee also delivered a workshop over the Sparkle Weekend on Trans equality in the workplace.

The stall raised just short of £500 towards the MORF Binder Scheme. Overall, the BUFF weekend raised over £1000, which will make a very real difference to the lives of dozens of trans men, a figure not possible without the support and dedication of UNISON members over the weekend.





UNISON North West Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Group

UNISON North West

Regional Centre

Arena Point

1 Hunts Bank

Manchester

M3 1UN