Regional round-up – it’s been a busy 12 months!

2016 UNISON Black members’ regional recruitment and self-organisation events at a glance.

Eastern region

2016 was another busy and productive year for Eastern Black Members. Over the last year our regional meetings have been well attended with new members coming each time. Over 15 members attend each meeting and it’s pleasing that they are coming from an increasing number of branches.

While only one branch has a fully functioning Black Members SOG, there are county-wide “cluster branch” SOGs open to all Black members within an area. The one in Norfolk is particularly successful in reaching members who have never been active in their union before. The region’s largest branch - Hertfordshire County is working hard to establish their own branch group.

Several members have been energised and supported by the regional SOG and are now in leadership positions in their branches. We are particularly pleased to see a number of Black members from private sector employers and community organisations become active and lead campaigns to get UNISON recognised in their workplaces.

We ran a UNISON stall at Luton Carnival with 8 volunteers from the group. This was a successful event and we recruited new members into the union and added a number of existing Black members to the SOG mailing list.

We also ran a recruitment stall on both days of the Bedford River Festival in July. It’s the largest free festival in the UK after the Notting Hill Carnival and was extremely busy. 12 volunteers from the SOG staffed the stall and we spoke to hundreds of people about the union’s campaigns, the value of union membership and the importance of Black members getting involved in our union. Scores of application forms were given out and we recruited new members into at least 7 branches.

In November we hosted our fourth annual education weekend, which was attended by over 20 members. There were numerous activities including workshops on developing Black leadership, speaking with confidence, challenging prejudice and the Trade Union Act 2016.

East Midlands region

On Sunday 21 August 2016, Leicester City held its traditional Belgrave Mela. People from all over the UK came to experience a gliterring mix of live music, dance, food, fashion arts and culture at the Leicester Belgrave Mela Festival.

Crowds indulged in delicious Indian cuisine from across the Indian subcontinent and shop till they dropped in our famous Mela Bazaar. The Mela also hosted free South Asian arts and cultural activities throughout the city centre and electrifying live entertainment on the main stage.

This year Ash Dhobi (Leicester City Local Gov Branch) and Sudeep Bone (Leicestershire Police and Justice Branch) from East Midlands region set up a UNISON stall in the heart of the Mela Bazaar in an attempt to recruit more members and raise an awareness of the work that UNISON does for people from Black communities. The day had been very successful with many people interested in becoming members of UNISON.

It was a long day for both Sudeep and Ash, but an enjoyable day meeting so many people from all the diverse communities of Leicester.

Cover photo by Amanda Kendal
Greater London region

Once again it’s been another busy year.

In the run up to the London mayoral and GLA elections we held a successful political engagement event hosted by Chuka Umunna MP. More than 100 attended, with a further 200+ on the waiting list. Attendees heard about how Black members really can make a difference and were encouraged to use their vote on 5 May. Feedback was extremely positive.

The Regional Black Members Committee members were delighted when fellow UNISON member, Sadiq Khan was elected Mayor of London and are proud to have nominated him for the Nelson Mandela Award. The committee are looking at ways we can work with the mayor in the future.

Our AGM took place on 16 September with guest speaker David Lammy MP. David spoke about a range of issues, including Brexit, and took part in a Q&A.

The working parties focused on motions, political engagement, supporting self-organisation and recruitment and organising. Each will continue as part of the 2017 work plan. Other ongoing campaigning issues will include working with the region to encourage the mainstreaming of equality issues, the Race Discrimination Protocol and ongoing engagement in UNISON and other political campaigns.

‘The Diaspora – the journey that brought so many to these shores, which they now call home’ was the theme of this year’s Black History Month event. Delegates heard from keynote speakers sharing their personal experiences and enjoyed poetry, music and singing as well as from Alim Kamara, a motivational speaker. Margaret Greer, chair, was presented with flowers and congratulations at the news of her appointment as UNISON National Race Equality Officer.

Looking ahead, the Regional Black Members Committee is committed to continuing to play an active role within the Greater London Region.

Northern Ireland Region

The Northern Ireland region continued to provide a number of activities and services for Black and migrant workers in the region throughout the year.

The group has also been involved a number of solidarity activities with refugees and asylum seekers throughout the year.

These ranged from attending various rallies and demonstrations (such as a solidarity rally with asylum seekers in the South of Ireland calling for an end to Direct Provision #EndDP – the system used by the Irish state to put asylum seekers in quasi detention centres for years while their request is being processed), right to very hands on practical work such as collecting bicycles, or painting a couple of rooms in a centre working with destitute asylum seekers to turn them into a mother and toddler space and a classroom.

Our clinics became increasingly busy in 2016. Sadly, we also lost our solicitor over the summer and had some difficulties identifying a new adviser. The clinics started again in October and have been fully booked ever since.

This has been a very important service for migrant workers members in our region. It has also been a useful recruiting tool for activists. The recruitment of new international nurses along with the consequences of Brexit are making this service all the more invaluable for the coming year. Our group feels very strongly about the need to secure proper immigration advice access as a mainstream service for UNISON members.
Northern region
The forum’s year started with a well-attended AGM in February, some attending for the first time. Estwar Sanichar was confirmed as the new chair of the forum, with Mavreen Ncube as vice-chair.

A new initiative from AGM was that the forum would set up two working groups. A group will look at recruitment, including resources and how Black members can link in with regional and branch recruitment events. The second group will look at activities, with a focus on designing the policy weekend, as well as other events including the Mela and Black History Month in October.

The forum held its policy weekend in July in Durham. The weekend was a success and well attended with a range of activities and speakers. Show Racism the Red Card ran an interactive session on the first day looking at ways to tackle racism in the work place; they also used the event to promote the Anti-Racism Ambassador Course, which they are running in conjunction with UNISON.

As Ash Dhobi, the deputy chair of the National Black Members Committee, updated the group on national activities and the progress of motions from last year’s conference. In addition, Hope Not Hate ran a session on community organising focusing on how to map and identify support. On the Saturday the focus was on writing motions with the chair, Estwar Sanichar, leading and giving insight from his experience gained from being on the Standing Orders Committee. The weekend’s final session was with Clare Williams, the new regional secretary, who was attending her first engagement.

This year has seen the group participate in a range of activities, including branch and regional recruitment events, Newcastle Mela, and Hope Not Hate’s ‘More In Common’ event. The group is planning further activities for 2017.

South East region
The training took place over the weekend of 16-18 September in Eastbourne and was delivered and organised by Sam Wines and Danielle Bruce.

As well as preparation and writing of motions, the new members were given a detailed understanding of how conference works. That is, information on how to move a motion, speaking times, Standing Orders Committee, regional meetings, fringe meetings, networking opportunities and stalls. Information was also given on how branches should be encouraging and supporting their Black members to attend conference and many other events and activities that are directly linked to Black members.

Rosita Ellis, Regional Committee chair gave a short presentation on the importance of attending regional meetings, an update on the new committee and what is happening in the region.

There were 20 delegates in attendance and of these, 13 delegates were new members and this was their first meeting and training. The outcome of the training was that 4 motions were produced and all were submitted to go to National Black Members Conference 2017.

Cymru/Wales
The Cymru/Wales Black Members Committee celebrated the National Day of Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its abolition movement on the 23rd August 2016 at Bute town community centre, Cardiff. It was very pleasing to see local residents join in with our event and many new contacts were made at the event.

A two minutes silence was observed to remember our brothers and sisters who gave their lives in the struggle for freedom. The event brought UNISON and the community closer, sharing common experience, and discussing...
the legislation on Modern Slavery Act 2015. Stephen Chapman (Anti Slavery Co-ordinator for the Welsh Government) was one of the keynote Speakers. Stephen talked about recent court case on forced labour where a man was made to work for no pay for more than 20 years. He highlighted the undesirable elements of human trafficking, prostitution and organised crime.

Vaughn Gething Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being, and Sport in the Welsh government shared his experience about common struggle and the need to work together for the good of the community in combating slavery and racism. Margaret Thomas Cymru / Wales, regional secretary and Margaret Greer (chair of National Black Members Committee) also spoke at the conference.

Fighting hate and challenging ignorance

Shabir Hussain reflects on the impact of recent changes in the political landscape.

The last year has seen a wave of hate crime with extremism and violent incidents affecting Black and migrant communities. Hate crime has no place in our society and communities should not suffer abuse or attacks because of their nationality, ethnic, cultural or religious background.

Britain is a multicultural democracy benefitting from the historic contributions of citizens from formerly colonised countries, and more recently, the contributions of EU and other migrant labour. Post EU referendum, the UK has returned to levels of racist violence and fear not seen since Enoch Powell, Wolverhampton MP, delivered his infamous Rivers of Blood speech in the late 1960s.

Noting this worrying trend, along with the fact that hate crime is under-reported, I felt obliged to do something. I believe there is a need to create awareness and understanding about what hate crime is, and to encourage others to challenge this cancer in our society.

As I write this article I reflect on the significant changes that occurred in 2016. Post-Brexit, I didn’t anticipate further political upheaval, but the election of Donald Trump in the US has raised the bar. The new president of the most powerful nation in the world is reported in liberal media as an unashamed racist, misogynist and authoritarian. He is far from the only threat to the fragmenting status quo. In France, the leader of the Front National aspires to emulate Mr Trump’s triumph. Europe’s leaders must side unambiguously with liberal values of equality, freedom and tolerance.

I see the spike in hate crimes across the country – and national reports linking the toxic rhetoric surrounding immigration fuelling extremist views and attacks – in the light of the international political context. The aftermath of Brexit has brought
out the worst in our society and unleashed far right views into the mainstream.

Following the Brexit vote, our nation’s hard-won reputation for tolerance is arguably facing its greatest threat for decades, as those who spread hate use the referendum result to legitimise their views.

Prevalence and trends

Hate crimes recorded by the police in July 2016 were 41% higher than the previous year, with a peak on 1 July. Records show:

- Race hate is the most commonly recorded motivation for hate crime in England and Wales
- Hate crime against Muslims in London has risen by 65% over the last 12 months (Metropolitan Police figures).
- Islamophobic hate crime offences against Muslim women have significantly increased because of the traditional dress code making them a more visible target to perpetrators.

The price of hate crime

Hate crime leaves a legacy of innocent lives lost and blighted and serves as an on-going reminder of the need to challenge it in our society and organisations. The murders of Jo Cox MP, Stephen Lawrence and Zahid Mubarek are just a few of the examples that highlight that we cannot afford to ignore hate crime.

UNISON and equality

UNISON has a proud history of fighting inequality, racism, bigotry and hate crime.

We are living through difficult times with challenges ahead and what we do and how we campaign is vital if we are to achieve equality. We have an opportunity to show solidarity, strength and unequivocal support within UNISON and an opportunity to reinforce the fact that the UK is inclusive, democratic and multicultural.

As an activist I would like to reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of any form of hate behaviour. We should remain united against the flames of xenophobia and racism fanned by some in our country who must not be allowed to sow division in our communities.

Our diverse society thrives precisely because of the rich coexistence of people of different backgrounds, faiths and ethnicities. I am proud of this heritage and it is something we must treasure and strive to protect. Together I am sure we will uphold the shared values underpinning our way of life.

Shabir Hussain is an equality and diversity practitioner, UNISON steward in Wolverhampton General branch and a member of Wolverhampton Black members self-organised group.

Black Lives Matter

All lives should matter but let’s keep it real

Who gets shot like it’s no big deal?

Seems to me, that being Black is a liability

Only a matter of time, before becoming a casualty

Of a war that is based on race

No public outcry, no justice or disgrace

Minding one’s own business is no defence

When merely existing, causes offence

How can a seizure justify being shot?

Where is the humanity? Where is the What?

When will Black lives matter, as a fact?

When will it cease to be dangerous to be Black?

Are we less human because of melanin?

Are we human garbage because of melanin?

Deserving to be exterminated and treated like vermin?

We have to rise up protest and campaign

Until all Black lives matter, with no shooting pain

Poem by Bev Miller, UNISON national Black members committee

New national race equality officer

Margaret Greer has been appointed as the new UNISON national race equality officer. Prior to joining UNISON as a member of staff, Margaret was a senior social worker, branch secretary, chair of the Greater London regional Black members committee and also the chair of the national Black members committee.

She brings with her a wealth of skills, experience and knowledge to support Black members in UNISON. She is delighted to be joining UNISON and looks forward to working with members in her new role.

Shabir Hussain is an equality and diversity practitioner, UNISON steward in Wolverhampton General branch and a member of Wolverhampton Black members self-organised group.
Black people and mental health

UNISON is calling for greater commitment from government to help the NHS tackle the stigma around mental health.

Most people will have problems at one time or the other in their lives, such as money worries, stress at work or the death of a loved one, which can affect their mental health.

Sometimes the effect can be serious and long lasting. It’s been found that around a quarter of visits to the doctor are for mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. However, people from Black communities can face additional problems that may affect their mental health.

Everyday life has a big impact on mental health, and Black communities in the UK are still more likely than others to experience problems such as poor housing, unemployment, stress and racism, all of which can make people ill.

In general, Black people in the UK continue to be more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems, more likely to experience poor outcomes from treatment and more likely to disengage from mainstream mental health services, leading to social exclusion and deterioration in their mental health.

It’s been found that Black men in Britain are 17 times more likely than their white counterparts to be diagnosed with a psychotic illness.

People from Black groups are more likely than white British people to be detained compulsorily under mental health legislation or put in seclusion. Research in 2013 indicated that Black people detained under mental health legislation are 29% more likely to be forcibly restrained than white patients. They are 50% more likely to be placed in seclusion and more likely to be diagnosed as psychotic.

According to Black Mental Health UK, Black people in the UK are 50% more likely to be referred to mental health services via the police than their white counterparts.

These differences may be explained by a number of factors, including poverty and racism. They may also be because mainstream mental health services often fail to understand or provide services that are acceptable and accessible to people in Black communities and meet their particular cultural and other needs.

It is likely that mental health problems go unreported and untreated because people in Black communities are reluctant to engage with mainstream health services. It is also likely that mental health problems are over diagnosed in people whose first language is not English.

UNISON is calling for greater commitment from government to help the NHS tackle the stigma around mental health. People experiencing mental health issues should not feel ashamed to seek support, and action needs to be taken to recognise the impact that a positive approach to mental health can have.

Get involved in UNISON’s campaign for better mental health services at unison.org.uk/mentalhealth.
Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitude is now an issue that we cannot ignore. Prejudice against the Muslim communities has been fuelled by some leading politicians and by an incessant stream of negative media reporting.

Muslims are continually represented as a threat; it’s been found that 61% of Britons now believe Islam is incompatible with British culture and up to 45% of Britons think there are too many Muslims in the UK.

As with any of other mainstream religion, Muslims come from diverse backgrounds. But Islam is being racialised, yes racialised, by the ideology of racist views and constant negative descriptions.

We see this sharp contrast in mainstream western media representations of Islam and Muslims. Muslim men are consistently seen as dangerous, Black-skinned, bearded men holding assault rifles. We also see Muslim women as veiled and oppressed. Sometimes they are dangerous; sometimes victims needing rescue from western intervention.

Muslims can be black, brown or white etc. but look at the attitudes about Muslims; look at the discourse surrounding Muslims and their faith; look at how Muslims and Islam are so politicised; look at the racial language that is used to describe Muslims. If a Black Muslim man commits an act of violence, the entire community gets stigmatised.

My concern is that racist sentiment turns into real attacks on people; real hate crimes, discriminatory acts, and vandalism of Muslims’ property (like the Muslim family’s home that was spray-painted with the word “terrorist”).

A recent study into the day-to-day experiences of British Muslims, carried out by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), found a sharp rise in the number of people reporting verbal abuse and an increase in the number of physical attacks since the survey was last undertaken in 2010.

Two-thirds of the 1,800 people polled said they had been subjected to verbal abuse, up from 40% in 2010, while 82% said they had witnessed Islamophobia being directed at someone else, up from 50%.

Reported cases of physical assault rose from 14% in 2010, to nearly 18%.

Muslims make up 4% of Europe’s population and in no country do they make up more than 7% (in the US the figure is between 0.2% and 0.6%). The majority of Europe’s Muslims lack (or are denied) meaningful political and economic influence and power at a national level; suffering discrimination, structural unemployment and the effects of poverty.

It is crucial that politicians and the media do not concede to a narrative that portrays all Muslims as terrorist because this is the climate in which far-right and fascist organisations grow.
Sadiq Khan receives UNISON’s Nelson Mandela award

Black Action profiles Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London and recipient of the 2017 UNISON Nelson Mandela award.

Sadiq Khan was elected as the Mayor of London on 5 May 2016 making him London’s first Black mayor and the first Black Muslim mayor of a major Western capital.

Sadiq Khan was elected as Labour MP for Tooting in 2005 and re-elected in 2010. He was appointed Minister of State for Communities in 2008 and later became Minister of State for Transport, becoming the first Muslim and first Asian to attend Cabinet.

From October 2008 to June 2009 Sadiq was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Communities and Local Government. He had special responsibility for community cohesion, religion and belief, the fire and rescue service, race, preventing violent extremism, the valuation and tribunal service and planning and local government.

He helped pass the Business Rates (Supplement) Act and was the first western government minister ever to visit the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, as part of a ministerial visit in 2009.

Before becoming a government minister, Sadiq was very active as a backbencher, with a very high attendance record. He spoke in several debates including those on young people’s participation in democracy, citizenship and integration, House of Lords reform, equalities legislation, the NHS, Legal Aid, Climate Change, Affordable Housing, International Development and the London 2012 Olympics.

In 2013 Sadiq was appointed shadow Minister for London, and in 2015 he led the Labour Party campaign in London in the general election.

Sadiq has been the chair of the Citizens Advice All-Party Parliamentary Group, vice-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Child and Youth Crime, chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party Home Affairs Committee, and founder and former chair of the Access For All Stakeholder Group.

Prior to becoming the MP for Tooting, Sadiq was a Human Rights solicitor and was a founding partner of one of the country’s leading Human Rights firms. In his last year as a practising solicitor he was listed as one of the county’s leading lawyers in two separate categories of law in the Chambers and Partners directory 2004-05 (human rights and police law).

He received Newcomer of the Year award at the 2005 Spectator magazine Parliamentarian of the Year awards “for the tough-mindedness and clarity with which he has spoken about the very difficult issues of Islamic terror”. He was runner-up in Channel 4’s Rising Star award, and was described as ‘one to watch’ by both The Independent and The New Statesman.

He was awarded the title of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Wandsworth in June 2006 and in 2008, Sadiq was awarded the Muslim News Award for Excellence. He was the first politician ever to be nominated for such an award.

UNISON is proud to add the 2017 Nelson Mandela award to the list of awards received by Sadiq Khan.
What might an exit from the EU mean for your employment rights?

Rakesh Patel from Thompsons Solicitors writes about the future of employment law rights after Brexit.

Over 40 years EU law has been incorporated into a huge amount of UK law: This article deals purely with employment law rights and assesses their immediate future following Brexit.

In the short term little is likely to change. Until the UK’s membership of the EU formally ends the UK is required to continue to honour all of its EU obligations, including employment rights. Until then at least these rights will substantially remain in their current form.

There are compelling practical reasons not to rush into giving the Article 50 notice despite political pressure to do so. Not least of these is that the task of reviewing which laws to keep or change is a substantial one which could take several years if it is to be done responsibly and with proper parliamentary oversight. There is also the recent judgement of the High Court that the UK government does not have the authority to proceed with the UK’s exit from the EU without the approval of parliament. The government’s appeal to the Supreme Court against the judgment was heard between 5 to 8 December 2016. The Supreme Court judgment is expected in the New Year.

The legal effect of the European Communities Act 1972 (the ECA) is that when the membership eventually ends, much of the EU-derived employment legislation will automatically end too. The statement of David Davies MP, the Brexit minister, suggests that he intends to take a light touch with UK employment rights:1

“There is also a political or perhaps sentimental point. The great British industrial working classes voted overwhelmingly for Brexit. I am not at all attracted by the idea of rewarding them by cutting their rights. This is in any event unnecessary, and we can significantly improve our growth rate by stopping the flood of unnecessary market and product regulation.”

None of this is to say that change is not going to happen. There are several EU-derived rights that are likely to be vulnerable in the medium term, and there is a little discussed longer-term impact as our law makers revert to a more insular approach.

Thompsons’ assessment is based on an appreciation of the practical challenges of Brexit; previous policy documents from Euro-sceptics; consultation documents from the Conservatives in recent years that floated ideas; statements from key politicians; and also campaigns and pressure brought to bear by employer lobbies.

There are some key employment law related changes that have been hinted at and some will be easier to implement than others. We would expect to see the following changes in some form or another.

1. An imposition of a cap on discrimination damages is almost guaranteed. Unlike unfair dismissal, there is no cap on the amount of damages that can be awarded by the courts in a successful discrimination claim, as this would be contrary to EU law.

2. Abolition of:
   a. age discrimination provisions
   b. agency worker protection
   c. payments made by the RPO (redundancy payments office) in cases of insolvency
   d. posted workers’ rights.

3. Weakening of:
   a. collective consultation rights in cases of insolvency or business transfer. Possibly also under the Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) Regulations but as these are less trade union focused they may not be substantially altered
   b. fixed-term worker protections
   c. part-time worker protections
   d. TUPE, especially making it easier for any post-transfer harmonisation of terms and the removal of an individual’s right to claim for detriment or dismissal
   e. working time regulations protections, particularly those on limiting hours (especially for junior doctors) and the calculation of holiday pay.

4. Reintroduction of the need for a comparator in pregnancy discrimination cases.

Some changes would be too unpopular to be seriously approached, for example the longer established discrimination strands of sex, race, and disability would most likely be substantially safe, although those which are more recent are potentially more at risk (e.g. certain LGBT rights and religion or belief protections); paid holiday; and some family-friendly rights.

The government’s recent approach has been to make it harder to access...
and enforce individual rights rather than abolish them. They have also severely restricted the amount of compensation available. It is possible that this is an approach they will adopt.

As much as these changes are perhaps predictable, asking what rights may be targeted is possibly the wrong question as it misses the bigger impact that Brexit is likely to have on employment and health and safety protection.

This will be its key legacy. The EU provides checks and balances to government excess. The EU structure sets out social standards of minimum entitlement that workers have the right to expect from the state. The state is legally bound to introduce measures implementing those entitlements or face sanction. That implementation must provide an effective remedy to the individual affected, and if it does not then they may sue the state for that failure.

When interpreting UK legislation the courts must do so in a way that furthers the social standards and if they do not do so adequately then the Court of Justice of the European Union allows an individual to challenge that. Where they do so, it is open to the UK government to make legislative changes to change the domestic law, but never in a way that provides less than they are bound to in EU law. If they do then the law may be struck down in the courts as being incompatible with the EU obligations.

So far as Thompsons is concerned the medium-term erosion of the UK’s employment and rights may be just the tip of the Brexit iceberg.

1Trade deals. Tax cuts. And taking time before triggering Article 50. A Brexit economic strategy for Britain’, 14 July 2016, http://tinyurl.com/z8m58yl

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**LGBT asylum seekers deserve dignity and respect**

February is LGBT History Month. Jonai Da Silva, UNISON national Black members committee writes about the commitments made to LGBT asylum seekers by the Conservatives.

Five years ago, the Conservative Party promised that it would protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) asylum seekers fleeing persecution. So far they have failed.

The Conservatives pledged: We will stop the deportation of asylum seekers who have had to leave particular countries because their sexual orientation or gender identification puts them at proven risk of imprisonment, torture or execution.

In recent years LGBT people have continued to face significant obstacles in navigating the complex and frequently unsympathetic asylum system.

In assessing these claims, civil servants have too often relied upon false stereotypes and humiliating questions which have led to many genuine people being refused asylum as they have failed to ‘prove’ their sexuality or gender identity.

Former Home Secretary, Theresa May, who is now Prime Minister, ordered an investigation into the Home Office’s handling of such cases, which found a fifth of asylum interviews contained stereotyping and a tenth contained inappropriate questions. These abusive practices have corrupted the asylum system for too long and need to stop, once and for all.

The UK is alone in detaining migrants indefinitely. Seeking asylum is not a crime, it is a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in domestic law, yet LGBT people fleeing persecution are incarcerated indefinitely in brutal immigration detention centres where bullying, abuse, and harassment are rife.

Theresa May accepts that the asylum system is broken and has repeatedly said that LGBT asylum seekers must be treated with ‘dignity and respect’. Is it dignified to subject desperate people to humiliating questions about their sex lives? Is it acceptable to incarcerate them indefinitely in immigration prisons? Can we justify allowing LGBT people seeking sanctuary to be bullied, spat upon, slapped and sexually harassed by those with whom they are detained?

The former Prime Minister, David Cameron, has been described as the UK’s ‘international ambassador for LGBT people’.

If this new government wants to demonstrate a real commitment to equality, the treatment of LGBT asylum seekers has to be on the agenda. Given the persecution LGBT people suffer around the world, these cases are frequently matters of life and death. Five years ago, the Tories admirably promised to protect LGBT asylum seekers fleeing persecution but so far, they have failed. Now it is time to deliver.
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**National Women’s Committee**
Davena Rankin, Pam Sian

**Black NEC members**
Abiola Kusoro, April Ashley, Elizabeth Cameron, Hugo Pierre

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Black *action* wants to hear from you

Black *action* is UNISON’s publication for Black members and activists. It provides information and guidance on the most relevant UNISON campaigns and issues affecting Black members and communities.

We want to hear from you. Black members are invited to share:

- Thoughts on Black Action articles and campaigns
- Black member branch and regional activity and campaigns
- Information on recruitment events
- Personal stories and experiences from the workplace and in UNISON
- Good practice in setting up Black members self-organised groups.

To contribute and discuss your ideas further please email blackmembers@unison.co.uk with a brief outline of what you would like to include.

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UNISON national Black members conference 2017

20 – 22 January 2017
Brighton Centre

Registration is now open, please contact your branch to attend.

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Join us on Twitter

Please follow @BlackUNISON to keep updated on UNISON race equality campaigns and activities.

For this year’s conference, use #ubmc17