

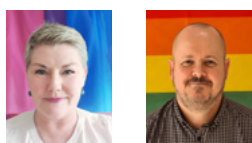
Summer 2021 Issue 70

# outin

The newsletter on LGBT+ equality UNISON

# Together we can

Lucy Power and Neil Adams  
National LGBT+ committee co-chairs



This time last year, we were looking forward... Forward to freedom, seeing friends and family, going to the pub, the cinema, to everything that wasn't lockdown. No one would have believed that we would have another two national, as well as local lockdowns.

While we were celebrating our Virtual Prides both within UNISON, and joining others as activists, it became increasingly obvious that the LGBT+ community was being heavily impacted by the pandemic. Not least of these was the mental health crisis. A study by University College London (UCL) and Sussex University, found 69% of respondents suffered depressive symptoms, rising to about 90% of those who had experienced homophobia or transphobia. Over 15% said they had faced discrimination during the pandemic because of their sexuality. The rate rose to more than a third among those living in homes where they were not open about their identity. Almost 10% of people reported they felt unsafe in their homes. ►



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UNISON  
the public service union

Two articles in this edition address LGBT+ Mental Health and LGBT+ Youth Homelessness, along with action we can take to address these very serious issues.

In one of our motions to UNISON's special delegate conference later this month we mention the research done by our colleagues at the LGBT+ Foundation in Manchester. We have highlighted how LGBT+ people have been hidden figures in the pandemic and how many of us have been affected. In the motion we recognise that these issues are workplace issues. Often the challenges are exacerbated by workplace experiences. We know that discrimination faced by LGBT+ people at work remains persistent and widespread. Sadly, we also know that there is still a significant lack of knowledge about trans equality among many employer HR departments and leads.

Our second motion celebrates 10 years of the Equality Act. Unhelpfully, not all parts have been actioned. We debated this at LGBT+ conference and are now raising the issue at special delegate conference. We also highlight our belief that the Government ignored the Equality Act during the pandemic by failing to carry out equality impact assessments on key policies.

As we write this, we've just heard the announcement of plans for a full public inquiry into the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. UNISON has called for the public enquiry to be sooner rather than later,

and that the success of the NHS vaccination should not let the government off the hook.

We know that *challenging discrimination and winning for equality* are at the heart of everything that UNISON does. Our second motion to special delegate conference also calls on UNISON to review and refresh its equality strategy – times have changed from when the original strategy was implemented. A new strategy needs to take into account developments during the pandemic. There is huge potential for online union organising. A revised equality strategy should reflect issues such as increased working from home, bullying and harassment taking place online as well as in the workplace.

Domestic abuse is, sadly, too common in LGBT+ relationships. UNISON played a major role in ensuring that new legal protections became law. For the first time in history, there is a wide-ranging legal definition of domestic abuse, which goes beyond physical violence to include emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour and economic abuse. UNISON successfully lobbied alongside Labour MP Jess Phillips for the introduction of domestic abuse protection notices, that will provide workplace protections for the survivors of domestic abuse.

We know that the ability to be yourself at home and at work impacts on your work performance, your relationships with colleagues and your health, both mental and physical. This is clearly a trade union issue, and there is still much to do.

The 2018 National Delegate Conference passed a motion that called on the National Executive Council to work with the self organised groups, regions and branches to continue to work towards making UNISON recruitment and organising, advice, negotiations, campaigns, services, communications and language inclusive of non-binary members. Much work has been

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The ability to be yourself impacts on your work performance, your relationship with colleagues and your health, both mental and physical"

done – and we continue to raise these issues with the NEC.

As we follow the roadmap out of lockdown, the national committee is looking at the work that was set for us during the 2019 LGBT+ conference. The pandemic obviously impacted on the work that we could complete in 2020. We are really looking forward to taking the work tasked to us forward.

Having had a successful LGBT+ Live! virtual event instead of our normal LGBT+ conference last year, we are looking forward to having a physical conference this year. If that isn't possible, we will have a virtual conference, giving us the opportunity to debate issues that are important to us. We encourage all branch and regional LGBT+ groups to keep an eye out for the conference bulletin, and to register your delegates and submit your motions in plenty of time.

In closing we would like to say a fond farewell to Darienne Flemington who stood down as co-chair at the beginning of 2021. Darienne had been a co-chair of the national LGBT+ committee since 2015! Dari, we would like to acknowledge the work that you did for us taking forward LGBT+ equality within UNISON, and being a role model for many of us on the committee. Your enthusiasm, energy and friendship made working with you a joy. Thank you from us all, and we hope you will continue to provide your wealth of experience in the years to come.

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We know that discrimination faced by LGBT+ people at work remains persistent and widespread."

# Working on the frontline in Health during COVID and the effects on colleagues

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Andy Armsby – National LGBT+ committee

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The last year has been an extraordinary time for us all. Not only has life changed for those of us who work in healthcare, but we've had our everyday life affected by COVID.

We have had lockdown after lockdown to try and halt the spread and prevent infections in those who were and still are clinically vulnerable. We've had to adapt to social distancing, wearing face masks, not being able to visit those we care about when we want to. Our ability to go out has been reduced; no more pubs, clubs or theatre visits. We have, however, had the pleasure of going for a walk. Oxfordshire, where I live, like many other areas of the country, is surrounded by beautiful countryside.

COVID has forced health care workers to adapt to working in a pandemic. Most of us, including me, never dreamt we'd spend a year working with so many restrictions and challenges. But what it has shown, is that we have amazing people not only working in Health Care, but in many other sectors. All of us ensuring services ran and supporting those in the greatest need.

We have learnt new skills, such as how to wear a mask with filters, new aprons/gowns and visors, personally having to remember

to remove the plastic cover on the visor to be able to see has been an important lesson to learn! Increasingly through the pandemic people have had to work even longer hours in difficult conditions with full Personal Protective Equipment. The physical effects on their health, dehydration, sore ears, sore lips and mouths very visible. What's not been talked about as much as I would of liked, is the effects this has had on mental health, the effects of social isolation in lockdown, how staff have not felt rested, how stress has increased, along with other symptoms of mental health such as depression, even despair.

I've seen the fear COVID has created in staff. I'll never forget witnessing staff wrapping clinical waste bags around their arms to protect themselves as they feared catching COVID by particles coughed out by patients. Clearly, we should have had better and clearer guidance. PPE used in Community inpatient units varied considerably from PPE worn in Acute Settings.

One thing has been very clear

– how colleagues have supported each other, listened to each other, and just been there for each other. In some areas we've seen colleagues redeployed to assist on the wards, bringing their skills and experience. To help combat the effects and risk of COVID employers have been required to risk assess staff and ensure they have robust action plans. This has helped to reduce anxiety around COVID.

Sadly over 1000 keyworkers caught and died of COVID-19. My own Trust, like so many others, did not escape losing staff to COVID 19. The sense of grief felt by colleagues is unmeasurable, but we have not had the time or opportunity to grieve these colleagues properly.

However, we still need to ensure both our physical and mental health are treated together and not separately, surely you can't have one without the other. What is good is that people are talking about mental health a lot more now, hopefully this will continue. Services need to be properly funded and developed, to meet the need for more support for us all.



# LGBT+ Mental health during the pandemic

Eileen Best – National LGBT+ committee

**We are all too aware of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on society. Every day we read or hear about the deaths linked to this awful illness and the impact it continues to have on society.**

Way back early in 2020 LGBT+ people, along with the rest of society started to not go out as much, we started to look at different ways of working and where possible began to work more from home than ever before.

Then as the pandemic took grip around the world, we weren't able to go out, or enjoy the freedom we were used to. We learned new words and phrases like lockdown, furlough, self-isolating and Coronavirus. Contact tracing, social bubbles, herd immunity and social distancing became part of our everyday language without us even realising. Words such as key-workers, essential workers and health care became more used on a daily basis as well, as it became very clear who provides the essential services to our communities, our countries and our world.

In amongst all this learning was the realisation that lockdown was going to be tough. Lots of our LGBT+ community realised we would be alone for sustained periods of time. Difficult decisions were made, some of us went back home to help fight the isolation. Some of us did not have that option. Others formed social bubbles with friends, some stayed in relationships that they would

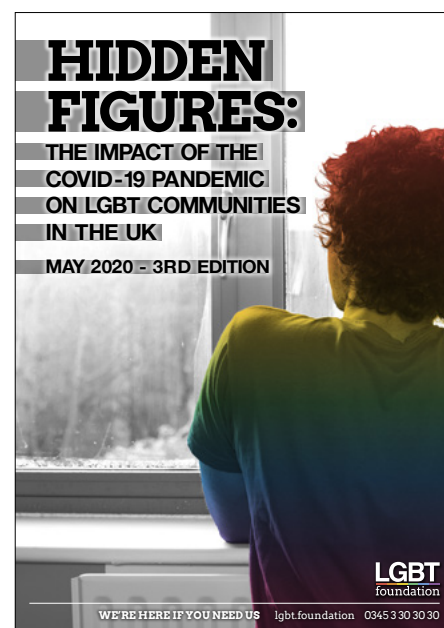
not have in more usual times. What we did not realise at the time was that lockdown would last so long, or be repeated.

We know that LGBT communities already face a wide range of health inequalities throughout their lives so will likely be disproportionately affected by the crisis in many ways.

The LGBT Foundation carried out a Covid-19 community survey of LGBT people living in Britain <https://lgbt.foundation/coronavirus/hiddenfigures> which doesn't make happy reading.

As a Mental Health Social Worker myself, I am all too aware of the increase in the suicide rate we are facing in Britain at this time. Day after day after day I work with people who are frightened and concerned for their future. A lot of people are just unable to see a way out of their crisis. This is exacerbated in the LGBT+ community as we are much more likely to have poor mental health. Sustained cuts to specific LGBT+ services over the years mean that we don't have the places to go where we feel safe. Wherever the question is asked, LGBT people experience poorer outcomes in healthcare.

Figures show that suicide rates are up, there are particular concerns about the increase in rate



for young women and middle-aged men. LGBT people are 6 times more likely to have suicidal thoughts than society in general. This rises to 9% in the Trans community. These are extremely frightening figures.

The rise in domestic violence cases during lockdowns has been widely reported. In our community this is also the case and in particular there is a real lack of services for trans women and men to access when they most need help. Surgeries and advice clinics have all been halted while the NHS faces its toughest struggle yet.

Older LGBT+ people may have a whole further set of difficulties as they may not have biological families to fall back on. Of course, we have our chosen families and they have provided many a lifeline in this current climate, but they can be pulled in all sorts of directions from family, friends, careers and other commitments.

The North West regional LGBT+ group has been working closely with the Hub of Hope and Chasing the Stigma to promote LGBT+ services. We have local and national links with Papryus which we intend to build on. It is important that we all get involved and build on these links to help us grow our strong, diverse and safe community again.



## Why become a Mental Health First Aider

Louise Ashworth  
Barnardos UNISON

Whether working front facing in public services, alongside colleagues in the workplace or for personal reasons, Mental Health First Aid can help develop understanding of mental health and the factors that can affect wellbeing.

It helps with practical skills to spot triggers and signs of mental health issues, improves confidence to step in, reassure and support a person in distress and enhances interpersonal skills such as non-judgmental listening. One of the most important aspects, is that it provides the knowledge to help someone recover their health. By

guiding them to further support including self-help resources, through their employer, through the trade union, the NHS and a variety of organisations.

Over the past year, mental health problems have been on the increase. One in four of us will experience a mental health problem in our lives. Statistics in relation to LGBT+ people indicate that this number is higher;

- People who identify as LGBT+ are more likely to have suicidal thoughts, and attempt suicide, than those who do not identify as LGBT+
- People who identify as LGBT+ are at increased risk of developing anxiety disorders
- Up to 16% of people who identify as LGBT+ experience symptoms of an eating disorder
- Mental health issues are more likely to affect young people who identify as LGBT+ than those who do not
- Young people who identify as LGBT+ are more likely to report self-harming than young people who do not identify as LGBT+

With tools to have conversations around mental health, we can help create a mentally healthy, supportive environment in our families, workplace, peer group or community.



## LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness 2021

Louise Ashworth  
Barnardos UNISON

### The Albert Kennedy Trust

have just published the LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness Report, five years since the last one and the findings are shocking.

- 13% of young people said they did not feel supported by parents or step parents while homeless
- 1 in 6 (16%) of LGBTQ+ young people were sexually abused by family members or partners before they became homeless
- Almost 2/3rds (61%) of LGBTQ+ young people felt frightened or threatened by their family members before they became homeless. 1 in 5 experienced this from their romantic partners.
- About 50%, said they were afraid that coming out as LGBTQ+ would lead them to be evicted.
- 64% of LGBTQ+ young people said homelessness made it ►



hard for them to establish or maintain new relationships including friendships

- Almost 17% of LGBTQ+ young people felt like they had to have casual sex to find somewhere to stay while they were homeless
- Just less than half (44%) of LGBTQ+ young people were aware of housing support services the last time they experienced homelessness. Almost one quarter were not aware of any support services available to them
- Only 35% of LGBTQ+ young people who accessed services, recall being asked by service providers to provide information about their gender identity and sexual orientation and just 33% felt safe to disclose this information. 59% of LGBTQ+ young people said that they faced some form of discrimination while accessing services.

These figures show that LGBTQ+ young people are experiencing a lack of support and understanding, do not have access to information about support and services and are being let down by services that are designed to support them. There are limited LGBTQ+ homelessness and accommodation services available particularly for those who do not live in major cities.

It is clear that further investment is urgently needed. It is also clear that services and accommodation providers need to be LGBTQ+ inclusive to prevent homelessness and to provide safe, secure and affordable accommodation for our LGBTQ+ young people.

Albert Kennedy Trust have produced a **toolkit** to help service providers to become more LGBTQ+ inclusive.



## Scottish self-organised groups come together to form Scottish Equality Liaison Group to organise against the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

Watty Gaffney  
Scottish LGBT+ Co-convenor



**In July 2020**, convenors and leads from self-organised groups in Scotland met to look at the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on our minority groups and to discuss how we could address the impact on our members. The aim of this joint group was to discuss inequalities highlighted or exposed by the pandemic, to examine new inequalities linked to the pandemic, and agree on the key equality issues and demands we must embed in our work for economic recovery. It was agreed that Young Members and Retired Members should be included due to the disproportionate impact on those groups.

The main issues which we identified as affecting LGBT+ members were evident in almost all groups, and our list of priorities grew rapidly.

To underpin our Equality & Covid-19 Recovery our action plan became clear, and we set out our UNISON equality agenda for recovery. We needed to locate UNISON and our equality message at the heart of recovery planning.

The group agreed to work together during the pandemic to review the adverse impact on all equalities groups from Covid-19 and relay to UNISON for parliamentary submission/lobbying and to review equality demands for the recovery and relay with UNISON for embedding in UNISON work within each of the service groups and with Scottish Government.

It was vital to promote SOG involvement in the Safety Rep Campaign – Be On the Safe Side and a benefit was utilising the safety campaign to find a new generation of SOG reps who could become more active locally and regionally. Our Retired members have huge experience and we targeted them to train as safety mentors during the safety campaign.

We continue to meet regularly to ensure our concerns are addressed and equality is embedded throughout UNISON Scotland's work and policies.

We have undertaken a huge amount of work to build our LGBT+ network across Scotland to enable better information sharing with equality and LGBT+ officers in Branches. This will enable us to highlight concerns quickly and ensure that issues are addressed with equality impact at the heart of everything we do.

# Domestic Abuse: the impact of Coronavirus

Jennie Antonio and Bev Miller

**The social and financial consequences of the Coronavirus epidemic have placed enormous stress on the personal lives of everyone. Going into lockdown the first time there were concerns that social isolation would lead to an increase in domestic abuse.**

Sadly, those concerns were not unfounded. LGBT+ people were impacted in particular ways. Many LGBT+ adults who were isolating had to move back into homes where they experienced LGBT+ phobic attitudes from family members.

LGBT+ people may have their sexuality and gender identity used against them as a tactic by an abusive partner who tries to keep power and control in a relationship.

Younger LGBT+ people are particularly vulnerable if they have to isolate with phobic family members who are not accepting of their identity. For many LGBT+ people socially isolating means being forced to hide their identities from family while in lockdown and isolation.

Trans survivors of domestic abuse are one of the most hidden groups. Abuse can include outing a person as trans and/or disclosing their gender history without consent or deliberately using the wrong pronoun or using a person's 'deadname'.

12 years of austerity cuts, together with further cuts being implemented under the cloak of Covid measures, have eaten away at the support and resources that

LGBT+ domestic abuse survivors are able to access. Creating an existential crisis in the third sector.

At a time when helplines and safe spaces are needed more than ever, LGBT+ youth workers, HIV and sexual health services, gender reassignment services, hate crime officers, LGBT+ community groups, switchboards are all being cut.

UNISON is a strong voice for its growing membership. It ensures the voices of LGBT+ members are heard, in the good times and the bad, defending public services and promoting equality. UNISON gave expert evidence to the long awaited Domestic Violence Bill, including requesting the provision of domestic abuse protections in the workplace.

## Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue

A UNISON guide

February 2017

**If you or anyone you know is affected by domestic abuse or violence issues the following support services are available.**

**GALOP** The national LGBT+ anti-violence charity National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans+ Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 999 5428 (weekdays 1000-1700; Wednesday/Thursday 1000 – 2000) Email: [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)



**LGBT Foundation Helpline:** 0345 3 30 30 30 (weekdays 0900 – 2100; weekends 1000 – 1800) Email: [helpline@lgbt.foundation](mailto:helpline@lgbt.foundation)



**UNISON's There For You** fund can provide assistance for anyone experiencing financial hardship in a domestic abuse situation.



UNISON has produced guidance for reps on why domestic violence and abuse is a trade union issue, which includes a model policy to negotiate with employers: <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24192.pdf>

# It's time for us all to speak up for women's safety

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Ian Pointon, Branch Secretary UNISON  
Kent Police & Justice Branch

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The issue of women's safety in our society has recently come into sharp focus with the tragic murder of Sarah Everard; murdered because she was a woman doing nothing more than walking home on her own. Whilst such murders are rare, we shouldn't take any comfort from that. It will certainly be no comfort for the family and loved ones left behind.

It would be foolish to view women's safety solely through the prism of one tragic murder. It is far deeper and wider than that. As an avid user of Twitter, I see the daily

abuse and vitriol that is aimed at women for doing nothing more controversial than expressing a view, an opinion. This abuse often relates to subjecting the

victim to violent acts such as rape and murder, usually from "brave heroes" who hide behind a cloak of anonymity. Far too often such threats go unchallenged, especially by social media companies.

What example do our parliamentarians set? During the Brexit debates in 2019 a long line of female MPs implored the Prime Minister to temper his language, language that was often quoted back at them in emails making death threats. He dismissed it as "humbug".

Having worked for Kent Police for 37 years, 32 of those as a police officer, I am acutely aware of the devastating impact of domestic abuse, whether physical or psychological, on victims, the overwhelming majority of whom are women. The one place where everyone should feel safe is often the place where women are in mortal danger.

How are all these things connected? They all set the tone in attitudes to women; a tone that directly impacts on women's safety. Safety isn't just about actual violence. Not all acts of violence leave a mark or a bruise. Often the injury is deep rooted psychological harm. It's about words and behaviour that are loaded with the threat of violence or danger; words and behaviour that encourage others; words and behaviour that demean. It's about a continuum of behaviour. If it's okay for the PM to dismiss female MPs' concerns as humbug, where do others then draw the line.

We all need to stand up and speak out for women's safety. Silence can be seen as acceptance. It is time for the silent majority to break their silence and demonstrate that they don't accept this behaviour; that they value the safety of our sisters, nieces, mothers and grandmothers. A safer society for women, is a safer society for everyone. We need to play our part.







# Women's safety

Emma Procter – UNISON National Women's Committee chair

**The terrible abduction and murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 as she walked home rightly shocked the entire country, but sadly this is not an isolated incident.**

Recent polling shows that 97% of women aged 18 to 24 have been sexually harassed, while 80% of women in all age groups reported having experienced sexual harassment in a public place.

In the UK alone, 118 women were killed by men in the last year. That's almost one every three days. Jess Phillips read their names out in Parliament in the International Women's Day debate this year – this year it took her over four minutes.

Worldwide, 283 trans and gender diverse people were murdered in 2020, with many thousands subject to homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic assaults.

The murder of Sarah

Everard jump-started a national conversation about male violence towards women that we must build on and ensure results in positive action for the future. Because the tragic reality is that in 2021 women still do not feel safe on our streets.

Maya Tutton, who created the Our Streets Now anti-harassment campaign, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme she first experienced harassment in public at the age of 12.

"What these incidents make you do is... that they make you fear going outside and they make you feel that you are not an equal citizen to your male counterparts and that you don't have those fundamental human rights to

go about your everyday life without living in fear," she said.

"We're so at the end of our tether with violence against women and girls never being a priority and never being an issue that we put money and resources into tackling."

Ms Tutton added: "By not putting the emphasis on the perpetrator and on really tackling that culture, what we're doing is we're not getting to the root of the problem – we are being forced to change our behaviour."

We change our plans so that we are not out alone after dark. Normal, everyday activities like going for a run or walking home are off limits to half of the population once it gets dark. Girls are taught to walk with their keys in their hands so they can defend themselves.

Women living in fear every day, women of colour, LGBT+ women. How can any of this be acceptable? Rather than safety advice messages about staying safe directed at women and LGBT+ people, we should be campaigning against the perpetrators of such violence.

As women and as a trade union we must not be silent. Violence and fear thrive when they aren't talked about. And as the UK's biggest women's organisation, UNISON has a part to play.

Just recently UNISON successfully campaigned to get key amendments included in the Domestic Abuse Bill. UNISON will carry on working and campaigning to ensure that the government takes this problem more seriously and introduces changes in the criminal justice system that better protect all women.

We are clear that at work, or at home or on the streets, women should be safe. Anywhere and everywhere. Whatever time of night or day. And many men can, and actively do, support this work.

We can vow to remember all the victims of male violence, but better to condemn the perpetrators rather than mourn the victims.

# LGBT+ Pride in Procurement

## It is Pride season once again

and although many events will continue to be held virtually this year, we will still be buying Pride and LGBT+ merchandise.

The National LGBT+ committee has been working with UNISON's International department and Labour Behind the Label to enable activists planning the organisation of or participation in Pride events, to become more informed so that we can promote Pride in Procurement in our workplaces, in our communities and around the world.

Inequality is an area that we need to be mindful of when looking at the garment industry big brands and retailers. Obscene profits are made at the top of supply chains whilst workers are paid poverty wages. Even when workers received the legal minimum wage, in most countries of production, this is short of a living wage. Some brands maximise their profits by seeking out production in countries with low wages and poor terms and conditions for workers including health and safety and anti-discrimination. Some workers might be working in countries where there is limited or no protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity and yet be making LGBT+ merchandise.

UNISON works with workers organisations and trade unions, LGBT+ groups and Global Labour Federation's to challenge anti-discrimination and to defend workers basic rights.

UNISON and Labour Behind the Label has produced resources including a leaflet and guidance giving details of the sort of questions we need to be asking when purchasing merchandise. Also questions to raise when discussing ethical trading with LGBT+

organisations that we work with, including Pride committees. One of the steps, we can consider is the adoption of an ethical procurement policy which covers expectations on transparency, worker's rights and LGBT+ inclusion which will provide the basis on which to consider potential suppliers or brands.

More information and helpful resources are available on our website [unison.org.uk/out](http://unison.org.uk/out).



## Making Links in our Regions with our Communities

**Andy Chaffer**  
West Midlands

**Every Regional Self Organised Group** has always made links with its LGBT+ Communities. Many were involved in originally establishing local Prides from the late 1990s onwards. Before that many ran or supported transport to the Pride in London when it was the only one in the UK.

This tradition continues, but it is taking different forms across the country, with some brilliant initiatives and ways of working.

Every Regional LGBT+ group attend Prides to promote UNISON and extol the virtues of membership of our union. The level of involvement with each Pride tends to vary and this is often based on if the individual Pride has aims and objectives which match up with UNISON's aims, objectives and values.

In Northern Ireland the SOG has a continuing and growing relationship with Foyle Pride. Martin McConnellogue said that "Foyle Pride comes from a non-commercial stance and feels it is a protest first and foremost to raise awareness and visibility for the LGBT+ Community." This year UNISON will be delivering a workshop on Celebrating Equal Marriage in Northern Ireland and looking at its implications for LGBT+ people. The workshop will include advice from Thompsons and will highlight the help individual members get e.g. the will writing service.

Other Regions support their Communities all year round and the North West regional LGBT+ group are very good at doing this. They have a long history of supporting Pride at the Pictures, which is now part of Liverpool City Region Pride. This offers monthly film screenings in a local cinema where UNISON have a stall and get an advert shown. They also have a relationship with a local LGBT+ asylum and refugee support group called Many Hands, One Heart and have worked with them to deliver events for IDAHOBIT.

The latest initiative in the North West, which they are in the final stages of confirming, it is a partnership between the LGBT+ regional group and the Manchester Village Spartans Rugby Union Football Club. They have had Gareth Longley, chair of the club, address one of their meetings. Gareth talked about the Village Spartans history

and their inclusive values and took questions. UNISON will be replacing Unite as their main supporter. The regional LGBT+ group are looking forward to working together across a variety of community and charity events to support and promote causes in line with UNISON values.

Different Regions operate differently, and all are at different stages of involvement with their local communities. These are all just another way of promoting UNISON and membership of our union, but also a way our union knits itself into our communities.

Out in UNISON would like to hear the ways that your branch / region is getting involved in your local community.



## Are you an LGBTQI+ Muslim? Could you be a Hidayah Ambassador?

**Judy Richards**  
UNISON South East Region

**Hidayah is a secular organisation** with projects and activities developed specifically for the needs of LGBTQI+ Muslims. (Hidayah means guidance in Arabic.) It is a registered charity led by volunteers. They are a mix of practising and non-practising Muslims and welcome friends, families and allies to all of their events. UNISON South East LGBT+ members attended their third birthday event a few years ago and spent a very enjoyable afternoon with their amazing volunteers and members.

Their vision is to ensure

LGBTQI+ Muslim voices are heard and understood. Their mission is to provide support and welfare for LGBTQI+ Muslims and promote social justice and education about their community to counter discrimination, prejudice and injustice.

Hidayah is looking to recruit Ambassadors to represent them and be a strong voice for the charity. They usually have monthly social meetups and safe spaces in London, Bristol, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow/Edinburgh and Cardiff/Newport but with COVID they have moved their activities Online. They also operate in the US.

They have a Wellbeing & Spirituality WhatsApp group. They offer emotional and well-being support, safeguarding people at risk and signposting to other services. Their "Walk With Me" Mentoring Programme provides advice and guidance to members. They also offer volunteering opportunities and have educational workshops, talks and conferences at universities. They have an Online shop with clothes, mugs, calendars, mousemat and other materials or you could ask your Branch or

LGBT+ group to make a donation.

You can contact their confidential e-mail service for support for yourself, a friend or anyone else at [info@hidayahlgbt.co.uk](mailto:info@hidayahlgbt.co.uk). Contact them if they are not currently operating in your area to see if they can work with you to bring Hidayah to your city and expand the visibility of LGBTQI+ Muslims. You can get more information from their Website [www.hidayahlgbt.com](http://www.hidayahlgbt.com) or by e-mailing them.

Hidayah are also active on social media: [hidayahlgbt](https://www.facebook.com/hidayahlgbt)

Remember – you are not alone.

*If you require immediate support or are at risk, then please contact your local health or emergency department. Or call the Samaritans (open 24/7) free on 116 123. They will listen to you, provide signposting and can help in stressful situations. This is confidential and will not show on your phone bill.*





# Digital Organising for LGBT+ Equality

John McSwiggan and Eileen Best  
Co-convenors of the Organising and Development Sub-Committee, UNISON national LGBT+ Committee

**After a year like no other**, we have all had to grapple with new ways of staying in touch with friends and family, faced new ways of working and celebrated Pride and other events remotely.

During this time we have seen our UNISON activists turning to virtual means of communication with members and potential members. LGBT+ Self Organised Groups have redoubled their use of social media, held meetings and training virtually and participated in a wide range of virtual Pride and other events. We also saw our first LGBT+ Live event, our virtual alternative to our usual annual LGBT+ Self Organised Group Conference in November. And whilst we all missed not being able to get together physically, it was fantastic to have so many activists participate in workshops, seminars and our virtual social.

The National LGBT+ Committee have produced a comprehensive guide to digital organising for LGBT+ equality. The guide explores how to maximise the use of our existing social media channels and how we can use other digital platforms to organise LGBT+ members.

The pandemic has highlighted further that digital organising must be an integral part of our overall approach to recruiting and campaigning for LGBT+ equality. Every year our members attend and participate in an ever-growing number of Pride and community events across the UK. Digital communications can help us to further raise the profile of our work, engage new activists to participate and enable us to recruit new members into our union.

This guide also covers new ways of holding meetings online and to deliver virtual training using a variety of platforms, exploring the many benefits to this approach, but also acknowledging the drawbacks, particularly the access issues this can present. It also explores new ways to develop virtual Pride and other events, highlighting some of the many good practice examples which will strengthen our ability to communicate our campaign messages and grow our union.

The guide is also accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation which includes speaker notes to support Regions and Branch LGBT+ Self Organised Groups to explore taking a digital approach to our work. The Guide and presentation can be found on our website at [www.unison.org.uk/out](http://www.unison.org.uk/out) entitled: 'Digital Organising for LGBT+ Equality'.

To recognise and celebrate the incredible work taking place across regions and branches, we will be launching, later this year, a Digital Organising for LGBT+ equality Award, more on that during the summer.

Download your copy of the Guide today and get organising digitally.



# Welcome to the Organising Space!



**The Organising Space** is a secure online resource developed to support all our activist

and organising communities. It's there to help us build relationships and share vital knowledge and info about all our activities.

It's a space to share helpful information, have discussions, ask experts and seek support, and you can do it all from your Smartphone Tablet or PC. Access is secured by MyUNISON, so you'll log in with a unique user profile under your own name.

To use MyUNISON, you need to register with My UNISON here <https://my.unison.org.uk>

When you have a password and your membership number you can logon to the SPACE here <https://organisingspace.unison.org.uk>

When you first log on to Organising Space the best place to visit is the green "Welcome to the Space" tile. Here you can click on the helpful tips and suggestions on how to get around.

What could I add to the Organising Space? Think about things like:

- Organising documents
- How-tos
- Useful Leaflets
- Reports of actions
- Pictures and videos

Any other resources you've found useful! Whatever has worked in your branches and you'd like to share with others.

Remember: Organising Space is being used by activists who may be working in isolation, so a small leaflet or a word of helpful advice may be really useful.

See you online!



# 2021 UNISON LGBT+ conference

The 2021 UNISON LGBT+ conference takes place in Brighton on 19-21 November. Hundreds of UNISON LGBT+ members attend and debate issues that are important to us and influence UNISON's thinking on LGBT+ equality. And did we mention it is the largest trade union conference for LGBT+ members in the UK?

Any full UNISON LGBT+ member can apply to their branch to attend. If you are interested in coming along you should speak to your branch as early as possible. Every branch has different ways when it comes to electing delegates to conferences and may have an agreed number that they send. The earlier that you let them know you are interested the more likely you are to meet any branch deadlines for applications.

If you aren't out in your branch, it doesn't mean that you aren't able to attend LGBT+ conference – you can contact your regional LGBT+ contact officers (details at [unison.org.uk/out](https://unison.org.uk/out)) and they can protect your confidentiality by contacting your branch on your behalf. Transgender members will be registered for LGBT+ conference as the gender in which they will attend the conference, irrespective of the gender recorded on the UNISON membership system (RMS).

Everything you need to know about the conference is available at [unison.org.uk/events/2021-LGBT+-conference](https://unison.org.uk/events/2021-LGBT+-conference)

Motions and elections at LGBT+ conference

Branch and regional groups will be meeting soon to consider if they want to submit motions to this year's conference – so if there

is a topic close to your heart that you would like the UNISON LGBT+ group to include in its workplan next year, now is the time to take these ideas to your branch and region.

The same groups can nominate LGBT+ members to attend national delegate and service group conferences in 2022, members to be on the 2022 LGBT+ conference standing orders committee and members of UNISON's delegation to the 2022 TUC LGBT+ conference. Elections for all of these take place at LGBT+ conference in November, but the deadline for nominations is in September.



## KEY DATES

**30 July** Deadline for the submission of motions

**20 August** Preliminary agenda published

**24 September** Deadline for amendments to motions/ motions to other conferences. Deadline to register delegates and deadline for nominations

**4 October** Deadline to register for reasonable adjustments such as large print

**22 October** Final agenda published

## Retired member delegate to 2021 UNISON LGBT+ conference

**UNISON's national retired members' organisation** is seeking two representatives to attend the 2021 UNISON LGBT+ conference. Travel costs, expenses and accommodation will be met from national funds.

Any retired LGBT+ members interested in attending should submit a supporting statement (no more than 200 words) by email to [c.derrig@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.derrig@unison.co.uk) or by post to Colin Derrig, national retired members' officer, UNISON, 130 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AY to arrive no later than 5pm 6th August 2021.

# Network meetings

In the lead up to UNISON's LGBT+ conference, we hold meetings for bi+, trans, Black LGBT+ and disabled LGBT+ members.

**These meetings are a great opportunity** to meet with other members who may face the same issues as you. There is the opportunity to meet the reps who represent you on the national LGBT+ committee and find out what they have been doing. These meetings also agree topics for motions to go to LGBT+ conference.

## Bisexual+ members meeting

Thursday 8 July

## Transgender members meeting

Thursday 8 July

## Black LGBT+ members meeting

Friday 17 September

## Disabled LGBT+ members meeting

Friday 17 September

## Bi+ Network Meeting

When you join us at the Bi+ Network meeting you will be contributing to motions to the LGBT+ Conference on Bi+ matters and concerns. It's a great way to contribute to the direction that UNISON takes on the issues that affect our community. There's also a chance to hear from inspiring Bi+ Activists, reflect on the year that's gone, as well as planning for the Bi+ year ahead.

It was at the Bi+ Network meeting that the Bi Caucus proposed becoming a bi+ network. This reflected the recent change to the LGBT+ SOG name. We wanted to be as inclusive of all

those in our Bi+ community, and demonstrate that inclusivity. The Bi+ Network meeting is also an excellent place to reflect on those issues that affect the Bi+ community specifically, such as Bi-erasure, mental health, and non-binary recognition at work.

Join us to make our Bi+ voices heard!



## Trans Network Meeting

We are very happy to say that we have an International Speaker attending the trans network meeting. Leo from Transgender Europe (or TGEU to its friends) will speak to us about the history of TGEU, give us an update on what is happening on trans equality around Europe and talk about joint work they are involved in with other trans and non-binary organisations in Europe.

We'll also have the opportunity to raise issues that affect UNISON's Trans members, and agree topics for the upcoming LGBT+ conference.

We'd love for you to join us.



## Black LGBT+ members Network Meeting

At this years' meeting, we'll not only be talking about issues that affect

“

The Network meetings are a fantastic opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones."

Lucy Power

Black LGBT+ members in UNISON and selecting our representatives on the national LGBT+ committee. But we'll be welcoming a speaker from Hidayahlgbt, who will be talking about the work that they do, Islamophobia and how it affects the LGBT+ community, and being Muslim and LGBT+. It's going to be a great session, and we'd love for you to join us.



## Disabled LGBT+ members Network Meeting

During the pandemic, UNISON disabled members ran a survey on reasonable adjustments and home working. Join us to hear from UNISON's national officer for LGBT+ Equality on the findings of the 'Lets be reasonable' report. We'll also be talking about the social model of disability, issues that affect Disabled LGBT+ members in UNISON. We'll agree themes for our motions to LGBT+ conference, and elect members to represent us on the national LGBT+ committee.

Please do join us.



For information about all of the network meetings, please contact us [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk)

# Is your pension invested in the occupation of Palestine?

Jackie Lewis – National LGBT+ Committee

**Updated research released by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in April shows that Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funds continue to hold at least £4.4 BILLION in companies involved in the illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine, and the violation of Palestinian human rights.**

The Israeli government can only maintain its occupation and grave violations of international law and Palestinian human rights because of products, equipment and services it receives from a range of companies and financial institutions.

These companies are either active in illegal Israeli settlements, or supply the infrastructure, technology and equipment that supports the military occupation. The settlements and associated infrastructure are built on stolen Palestinian land and are illegal under international law. These companies are often funded through investments, including by pension funds like the LGPS.

PSC's updated research found that 85% of the local authority pension funds analysed have holdings in companies included in the UN Human Rights Office's list of 112 business enterprises active in Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Since April 2020, when PSC defeated the UK government in the Supreme Court and overturned government guidance restricting the ability of local authority pension funds to take ethical investment

decisions, hundreds of LGPS members from across the UK have written to their local pension fund committee, demanding they take immediate steps to end their complicity in Israel's violations of international law.

This pressure is having an effect. Last year, the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum, representing over 80 local government pension scheme funds, began correspondence with companies cited by the UN "as having human rights concerns through their operations in the Israeli settlements/Occupied Palestinian Territories." And earlier this year, after pressure from scheme members and local campaigners, East Sussex Pension Fund divested from Israel's largest private arms manufacturer, Elbit Systems.

UNISON's guide '*Palestine: Is your pension invested in the occupation*', **available on the UNISON website**, provides scheme members with a range of actions they can take to encourage their fund to put pressure on the companies involved in the occupation of Palestinian land, and begin the process of



divestment from companies listed on the UN Human Rights office's list of business enterprises active in Israel's illegal settlements.

UNISON is calling on pension funds to begin the process of divesting from companies on the UN Human Rights Office's list as an important first step. The union is also calling for pension funds to engage with other investee companies involved in the settlements and the violation of Palestinian human rights, to demand that they cease these operations or risk divestment.

PSC's LGPS Divest campaign, supported by UNISON, Unite, and the GMB, is calling for administering authorities of the LGPS to implement adequate investment screening and due diligence procedures to guarantee that scheme members' money is not used to support Israel's violations of international law.

All members – whether in the LGPS or not – are urged to contact their councillors to ask that they take action to end their pension funds complicity in Israel's violations of international law. Please visit the LGPS Divest website (<https://lgpsdivest.org>) which has e-actions for doing this, along with more information on the campaign and a search function to see which councils are investing in which companies associated with the occupation.