#### Intersectionality

The word describes how various identities *‘intersect’* to create unique patterns of oppression through systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination.

‘Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.’ - **Kimberlé Crenshaw**

Each and every one of us experiences the world in a different way and these *lived-experiences* are determined by the different aspects of our identities. Such synergies of identity are known as intersectionality and may manifest in positive and negative ways.

A gay man may deal with homophobia. A Muslim man may deal with racism. A gay Muslim man may deal with both of these things, perhaps even from within both the LGBT+ and Muslim community.

A Black, disabled lesbian may have to navigate life dealing with homophobia, racism and ableism and it would be impossible to dissociate her lesbian identity from her Black or disabled identity to isolate the multiple dimensions that are causing her to suffer discrimination. This person may find themselves unable to access certain venues due to accessibility issues as well as facing racism and homophobia on a daily basis.

Another example of intersectionality may be seen in the case of a disabled, trans man and the way in which they experience the world. This may be a complex experience and resultant of multiple aspects of their identity. It also enables them to cross the boundaries of their identities, which together form a balanced individual with a unique experience of the world.

#### What is privilege?

Privilege is not just something that white people benefit from. Men benefit from a privilege over women and cisgender people over trans, non-binary or gender diverse people. When we talk about privilege and a person having privilege, it is not to imply that person has any particular advantages but that they do not suffer from the disadvantages associated with for example, being trans or Black.

#### How can we be mindful of intersectional issues?

* **Recognise privilege** and treat everyone with the same level of respect and recognition of their identity and try whilst also looking at yourself and your identity, which shouldn’t take precedence over any other.
* **Listen and learn –** intersectionality is about learning from and understanding the lived-experiences of diverse people, whilst also being mindful of the above.
* **Understand** from your own perspective how you may be intersectional too, to empathise with others.

#### Good practice in the workplace

* Is there a way for people with lived experiences to share those with others and bring awareness to issues?
* Does your employer encourage Staff Network groups where colleagues can meet around a certain issue?
* Are there ways your employer can help embed equity, diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of the workplace, to encourage diversity and celebrate intersectionality?
* Does your UNISON branch have self-organised groups or an Equalities Forum where colleagues can meet around workplace issues?
* Get involved in UNISON Self Organised Groups by contacting your regional contact – details can be found on the national website.

**Other helpful resources**

* <https://www.unison.org.uk/search/intersectionality/>
* <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/>
* <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/lgbt/group-structure-and-contacts/>