

# 2023

## YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS

Establishing legacy to  
generate change

### Negotiating for race equality: performance management and career progression

#### Why is it vital to challenge racism in performance management and career progression opportunities?

Because it will

- ensure **Black** workers have equal access to career progression, good quality jobs and pay
- help address deep-rooted discrimination and reduce unfair treatment, including stereotyping
- help recruit new members and activists, of benefit to all the membership and contributing to the growth and future strength of your branch
- place public authorities under a proactive duty to identify activities to help address any inequality in the workplace.

No workplace where racism is allowed to flourish can ever be effectively organised. That's why anti-racist work must be part of all branch activity.

#### Evidence of the problem in workplaces

The TUC's research and report '[Still rigged: racism in the UK labour market](#)' highlights how Black workers feel marginalised, pigeon-holed into specific tasks or taken advantage of, often being assigned less popular shifts (night-time, unsociable hours) than their white colleagues, or held more accountable than their white peers.

The research found that, "when asked about unfair criticism and scrutiny in the workplace, **one in seven BME workers reported facing unfair criticism** (14%) in the last five years. 8% report being unfairly disciplined, and 7% have been subjected to excessive surveillance or scrutiny. This demonstrates how racism instils precarity for BME people in the workplace.

**More than one in ten BME workers' experience of work is also affected by being denied promotions** (12%) and having requests for training turned down and development opportunities denied (9%). The allocation of tasks and work is also an issue, with 12% of BME workers reporting being given harder or less popular work tasks, and one in ten saying they are not offered overtime. A similar proportion (9%) say that they have not been given sufficient working hours...

...When asked about BME staff development programmes, only 10% said their employer had this in place, and **only 9% said their employer had targets to tackle the underrepresentation of BME staff.**"

## How can branches help make sure managers' use of performance management is fairer and more non-discriminatory?

- Educate yourselves. Make sure union reps have the knowledge and skills to notice, deal with and report racial discrimination in the workplace. Make sure Black members are properly represented amongst reps and branch officers.

Contact your **regional education teams and / or LAOS** to find out what training and resources are available to assist you with negotiating with your employer or promoting the issues in this leaflet with your members <https://learning.unison.org.uk>

When representing members with race discrimination cases individually, refer these cases under UNISON's **race discrimination claims protocol**.

- Push for all staff including managers to receive mandatory equality and diversity training that specifically includes anti-racism. This should be part of the induction process, with refresher courses available. Stress that all managers must be trained in performance management.
- Ensure that your employer undertakes equality impact assessments for all its strategies, policies and procedures to ensure they promote inclusion and anti-racist principles.

More information in UNISON's **Model equality impact assessment flowchart**

- Urge the employer to undertake monitoring and collection of ethnicity data in the workforce so that they can identify areas where changes are required. Ensure monitoring data covers all areas of workplace practice.
- What does the monitoring of performance management and progression reveal? Are Black workers disproportionately failing to be selected for promotion in spite of applications, or not accessing training and development opportunities? Ask for information for a set number of past years (such as 5) so that you can see if there are any trends.
- Check for patterns for particular groups or in particular teams/settings in branch casework. And talk to members about their experiences. Why do they think this is happening and what action has been taken so far?
- Are race equality targets (including on promotion, training and grievances) set as a result of the monitoring? Are these targets specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound?
- Are performance assessments based on measurable and unbiased criteria, that are transparent and consistently used? Do they refer to specific tasks and achievements?
- Is your employer precise about what is required of managers in managing poor performances and what responsibilities they have to provide ongoing supervision? Do performance management procedures take account of potential unconscious bias?
- Do Black workers feel that they have little communication with management and are given little or no supervision and guidance?
- Is there a specific policy or scheme for career progression? Is there open access to career development opportunities and are workers being paid for taking on extra responsibilities? This would help ensure that all workers have the chance to advance their career.
- Are all workers eligible to apply for any promotion or acting up opportunities? If not, what reasons are given for opportunities only being made available to some workers and not others?
- Are promotion/acting up opportunities clearly advertised internally? Do employers follow standard recruitment procedures for promotions, using clearly defined job descriptions and person specifications?
- Work with senior management to champion diversity in the organisation, to properly scrutinise any concerns raised and to promote progress in working for real change.