



# UNISON's National Delegate Conference – Let's push for LGBT+ equality

Welcome to this edition of Out in UNISON – we've got an exciting edition for you! This edition coincides with the 2023 UNISON National Delegate Conference. For everyone attending, we wish you a great conference.

If you are a delegate at conference, make sure you support the LGBT+ national committee motions. We have two motions on the agenda:

- Motion 2 'Equalities Grow Our Union' – This motion sets out how we are stronger together. It highlights that self-organisation is often the gateway for members to become great activists. We are asking the NEC to promote self-reporting via My UNISON and for the NEC to promote best practice from all the SOGs. We also want to encourage support for our bargaining initiatives such as promoting the trans equality model policy.
- Motion 57 'Making 2024 The Year Of LGBT+ Workers' – The national LGBT+ Committee want

to use 2024 to raise awareness of LGBT+ rights and discrimination in our union, to promote our work on LGBT+ equality, to encourage and support bargaining on LGBT+ rights and to showcase our successes.

Also, make sure you read our LGBT+ newssheet while you're at conference!

Our next edition of Out in UNISON will be in November, to coincide with our national LGBT+ conference. We welcome any contributions from our LGBT+ members – so if you'd like your story featured, highlight a workplace win or promote how you've organised around LGBT+ equality, we've love to share it. Send your contributions to [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk)

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# Finishing the fights Terry Higgins started

Terry Higgins has been made known by the organisation founded in his memory after being the first named person in the UK to die of an AIDS-related illness. He is less known as a trade unionist.



Above: Richard Angell speaking at QB Richard with Terry Eastham and Anu Prashar  
Photo: UNISON's national LGBT+ committee

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## Richard Angell, Chief Executive of Terrence Higgins Trust

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**When he arrived in parliament in the 1970s, things were different. Unions didn't speak to management and LGBT+ rights were not on the agenda. Terry would change both.**

As his then co-worker, Vanessa Clarke, [wrote in House Magazine about their time working for the transcribing service Hansard](#): "Trade unions existed in Parliament, but they didn't yet have proper recognition and direct access to the employer. It was more like an old-style staff association: you put your views to your boss and they represented them (or not) to the main employer. Naturally, the supervisor and her boyfriend [also her boss] had that carved up between them, and no one else got a look in. Terry disapproved."

Very soon "and with the blessing of union headquarters, a proper

election was held." Vanessa was elected chair and Terry, secretary. This did not go down well. On one appalling occasion, the supervisor's boyfriend was so angry at the impertinence of Vanessa daring to negotiate better rights, he grabbed her by the shoulders and shoved her out into the corridor with such force that her head hit the opposite wall. Enter Terry. "You lay a finger on my union chief again and I'll drop you right here in this room, so help me!" Staff relations, Vanessa reports, "were never quite the same again".

After Terry died and Terrence Higgins Trust was born, Vanessa was still working away. She was a member of the joint-union committee when the House of Commons Equalities Statement was being discussed. In memory of her friend and former colleague-turned-Heaven nightclub DJ, she ensured LGBT+ rights got their first mention. She had been warned off

by comrades from other unions and management alike, but she kept to her guns and started a change that has resulted in ParliOut – the queer staff network in Parliament – and much more besides.

The organisation I am so lucky to lead was not created simply because Terry was 'the first' but because he had so much impact on those who knew him. They set up the organisation so no one else would have to go through what he and they did. Four decades on, everything has changed about HIV but the stigma. There is still no cure and no vaccine but because those on effective HIV treatment cannot pass on the virus there is every possibility the UK could end new HIV cases by 2030. In fact, we could even be the first.

Every trade unionist should join with us in this fight. Like a proper union for Hansard, this is a fight Terry started but it falls to us to see through. Will you join me?

## Greater London activist awarded Stonewall Change Maker of the Year

**Ant Babajee, CRM Manager at Middlesex University and member of UNISON's Greater London LGBT+ Committee, has been named Change Maker of the Year by Stonewall.**

On receiving this recognition, Ant says: "It is really overwhelming to have been recognised by Stonewall for my LGBT+ and HIV activism and advocacy.

I have been co-chair of the LGBT+ Network at Middlesex for the past four years, and I was recently elected as the LGBT+ Officer of our UNISON branch.

I am also a former BBC journalist, and I have been living with HIV since 2007.

A lot of what I do as a Change Maker happens outside of my workplace, and I am incredibly thankful to colleagues at Middlesex for supporting all of my LGBT+ and HIV advocacy and activism.

I am always so keen to emphasise just how much HIV has changed – I continue to be shocked by how few people, even in our LGBT+ community, know about U=U [Undetectable equals Untransmittable] message, which means as someone on effective HIV treatment I can't pass the virus on, and PrEP [pre-exposure prophylaxis], which is a pill you can take that is extremely effective at preventing HIV.

With the unanimous support of my UNISON branch, last year I got a guidance document for managers on supporting team members living with HIV adopted by the University.

"It means so much to me I can bring all parts of my identity to work. I don't have to hide in the shadows. I can be simply myself – that is invaluable.



*Stonewall Award Ceremony. Photo by Daniel Lewis.*

## Raising the age of our classification of young members

**Jack Anderson-Player, national LGBT+ committee member**

**Getting young members active is a perpetual problem in UNISON. One of the main barriers is that once a young activist reaches the age of 27, there is nowhere specifically for them to continue their activism.**

We need urgent change, and for UNISON to follow the actions of Unite, RMT and GMB by raising the age of young activism to 30. Issues affecting young workers are affecting people beyond the age of 27 as the realities of being a younger person are more extreme than ever before. Young people are more likely to face unemployment, underemployment, poor earnings, casual and temporary labour, zero-hours contracts, and workplace exploitation. They are also less likely to be able to live independently than previous generations as securing your own residence is difficult. Rights and

opportunities are being reversed and the current tory government are doing little to help young people build lives and futures.

Everyone, regardless of age, should have the opportunity to work and advance in their careers. As a union forged with a vision of making better for workers, young members and activists are the bread and butter of UNISON in the future. Facing different challenges to those who lived through the previous years, young members and activists stand to benefit immensely from an effective and efficient union, but they are being let down by an outdated mandate for our young members. Shockingly, the average age of a UNISON activist is 48. All our activists are invaluable in guiding and passing on information and skills to those who want to learn but with an approximate number of only 63,000 young members, we're up the creek without a paddle if we don't act now on the aging out of our young members.

Our union is faced with increasing challenges in recruiting and organising young members, ensuring that their issues are dealt with efficiently and effectively because issues faced by young workers do not stop when a person reaches the age of 27. We are the largest union in the UK and we need change to maximise our campaigning and bargaining potential. Our members, including our young members, are working their fingers to the bone to keep public services going, all against a barrage of cuts to stretched government funding.

It is down to all of us to make sure that the fight doesn't end. We can only do that with extended young member participation in our union, which we must support.

Please vote YES to the national young members' forum rule change (rule change 2) at NDC so we can get our young members on par with other unions.

# Autism and LGBT+

Penny Smith, national LGBT+ committee member

**Finding out that I'm autistic as the age of 60 has been a roller-coaster of emotions and discoveries. Having also had the courage in last few years to come out as a pan-romantic asexual rather than saying I was bi (and finding that followed a similar journey) I started wondering on the correlation between the two. So, like any typical neurodivergent person I started researching and was surprised and not surprised by the results.**

Cambridge University's Department of Psychiatry released a new study by Elizabeth Weir in 2021. Their headline reads "Adults with autism report a broad range of sexuality – being much more likely to identify as asexual, bisexual or homosexual than people without autism".

In the survey of nearly 2,400 adults, researchers found that those with autism were three to nine times more likely to identify as LGBT+, asexual or "other." They stated that the underlying reasons were unclear. One possibility is that people with autism are less bound by social expectations, and feel freer to express their true identities, said researcher Elizabeth Weir. The survey involved 1,183 people with autism, aged 16 to 90. Overall, people with autism were less likely to say they were sexually active. For every 10 adults who were not autistic and who were sexually active, four with autism said the same. People with autism were also almost eight times more likely to describe themselves as asexual.

Older research suggests that, on average, autistic people tend to be LGBT+ at a greater percentage than non-autistic



people. George & Stokes (2018) found that nearly 70% of their autistic study participants identified as LGBT+, in contrast to only 30% of non-autistic participants.

Studies vary widely on the percentage of people with autism who are gay, lesbian, or bi+. One analysis suggested the rate is 15 to 35 percent among autistic people who do not have intellectual disability. Also, a larger percentage of autistic people reported their gender as being something other than the binary of male or female, compared to non-autistic people.

Why is neurodiversity more common in the LGBT+ community than it is among cisgender, heterosexual people? Researchers theorise that, as neurodivergent people are less likely to adapt to social norms, they are more likely to question and explore their gender and/or sexual identities. Studies have also found that gender diverse people were more likely to report autistic traits and suspect that they have undiagnosed autism.

Despite harmful misinformation in the media about the "overdiagnosis" of certain neurodivergent identities, the reality is the opposite for people in the LGBT+ community. Generally, LGBT+ people are less likely to

get the health care they deserve and, because of this, are less likely to receive certain diagnoses and corresponding support. Additionally, LGBT+ neurodivergent people experience discrimination related to their gender and/or sexual identity. According to a study from 2018, 70% of gender-diverse, autistic young people reported needing gender-affirming medical care, but 32% said that their gender identity had been questioned due to their autism diagnosis. Discrimination in the health care system as well as heteronormative and sexist understandings of neurodivergence leave many LGBT+ neurodivergent people undiagnosed and/or unsupported. It is time also to recognise that neurodivergence has nothing to do with intelligence or capacity.

My disability is very real and comes from a world that is designed by and for people who think in one way. My sexuality sits well alongside my autism, I'm just sorry it has taken most of my adult life to come out as both. However, having the courage to be true to myself by proudly sharing my panromantic asexual autistic labels is very liberating and I thank my UNISON family for helping me along the way.

# UNISON's Trans Equality Campaign – Looking Forward to the Challenges of Year 2

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Jenny Black, co-chair national LGBT+ committee

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If you are reading this at National Delegate Conference, then you are probably aware that we are just weeks away from the first anniversary of our Trans Equality Campaign.

Year 1 has been a lot of hard work for the team (officers and lay members) but the support we have received from the wider membership has been phenomenal.

Our year started with the proposals to rename our group. We were previously known as the Trans Caucus, a group that sat within the National LGBT+ Self Organised Group. Last July, there were only 123 members out of our 1.3m who identified as trans on the membership system and we rarely attracted more than a dozen to our twice yearly meetings. We had a discussion around changing our name to be more inclusive and following an online poll of existing members we settled on 'trans, non-binary and gender diverse network'. We know this is a bit long, but it reflects the true identities of our members and has proven to be the right thing to do. Since the name change our membership has more than doubled!

We have focussed on was the delivery of our trans ally training. We recognised we needed to get 'buy in' from the top to the bottom of the union so we have been creative with who we have delivered it too. Individual Branches have signed up and had the training as have Regions, Service Group Executives and UNISON's National Executive Committee. We have delivered



at Regional Development Days, Service Group Seminars, AGM's, Regional Councils etc, both online and in person. To date over 800 members have taken part who now recognise the need for us to have a network of trans allies and for our trans model equality policy to be adopted in workplaces.

We haven't left it at that though! It was obvious we needed to improve the communication with our new network members so decided to increase the meeting cycle from twice to four times a year, in addition to that we e-mail out whenever we have an update or a piece of relevant news to share. This has been really positive in developing our activist base, at the last National LGBT+ Conference we had over 35 members attending the network meetings and workshops and at our last online meeting we had around 45 attendees.

So, what does Year 2 hold? Well, the current negative social climate that trans, non-binary and gender diverse people find themselves living in means that there is a definite need for another 12 months of activism. At the time of writing this article we are busy developing a new training package so that we can train other network members to become trans ally trainers. So far, we have had over 30 people who have signed up for this. This will enable us to expand the

programme we deliver and hopefully have thousands of members active as allies, not hundreds.

We will also be starting to monitor how many work organisations take up our trans equality model policy. It is important that we do this as it shows evidence of the organising and bargaining element of our wider campaign. Yes, we need more trained allies, but we also need workplaces to adopt our policies so that they become a safer place for our trans, non-binary and gender diverse members to be themselves.

Also, as a direct result of member feedback we are also starting to collaborate more with other trans and gender divergent community-based organisations and are now sharing their work with the relevant network members and regional groups.

We have exceeded our targets and expectations, we have more allies trained than we thought possible, our network membership base has more than doubled, we have dozens of keen new activists itching to get involved and we are getting our policies adopted in the workplace. Winner winner chicken dinner!!!

Thanks to everyone who has supported us, took part in the training or got involved, we really appreciate your activism and solidarity, roll on year 2!



Screenshot from the  
*Our journeys film*

# Our Journeys – Phenomenal response to Northern Ireland trans film

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## Northern Ireland LGBT+ group

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What an amazing few months we have had in Northern Ireland. We completed the film 'Our Journeys' and released it to the world via private screenings, in Ulster of University and in our regional office. 'Our Journeys' is a documentary that tells the stories of transgender people, gender-queer people and their families. It provides an intimate look at the challenges they face in their daily lives, as well as the love and support they receive from their families.

The film was shown at the UNISON LGBT+ conference last year, and to quote one of the comments received 'the short film

was emotional, informative and the individuals truly inspirational'

We've since had some questions and answers sessions which went really well and gave the audience a chance to meet and put opinions and questions to all those involved in the project.

And we've had some notable support. The local Mayor of Derry and Strabane Council backed us 100% and provided the Guildhall to launch Northern Ireland's local Trans Equality is UNISON Business campaign. The Mayor of Derry and Strabane held a reception for Martin McConnellogue, former member of the national LGBT+ committee, to present him with

an award in recognition of his commitment for LGBT+ Rights and Trade Union Activism. A massive well-done Martin – your friends and colleagues are so proud.

On Trans Day of Visibility this year, we released the film on Foyle Pride Channel on YouTube (Our Journeys) to an amazing response and so much positive feedback. This film was made possible by the tremendous support of our branches throughout Northern Ireland. All our work in Northern Ireland is only made possible with the support of our branches and the continuing collaboration and partnership work our LGBT+ SOG and UNISON Northern Ireland.

# We need Green Reps!

By Penny Smith, national LGBT+ committee member

**In 2021 a motion was passed at our LGBT+ Conference on climate change being an LGBT+ issue. The motion was based on the idea that climate change is a catalyst that will enable those with resource and power to further marginalise any out groups that don't conform. This is based on the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Those already most vulnerable and marginalised will experience the greatest impacts. The IPCC finds LGBT+ communities as a hidden victim of climate change, because of its social vulnerability.**

The National LGBT+ Committee are delighted by the introduction of the role of Green Reps within UNISON. In 2019 a national campaign was launched for a first ever nationwide Green UNISON Week, with branches across the UK organising a week of activities calling for urgent action to tackle climate change. As part of Green UNISON Week, members across the regions supported the school climate strikes and took action themselves. The week was a success with Regions and Branches taking part and sharing photos on our website.

Then 2020 and a global pandemic arrived that put many of our annual events (even new ones on hold). However, the pandemic taught us the ability of nature to reclaim the earth when we stopped.

In Spring 2021, Green UNISON launched a series of green webinars. UNISON intends to lead the way by working towards the greening of all UNISON workplaces and ensuring that all its activities are environmentally responsible and in keeping with the union's green policies. The union also produced online green information seminars for green reps, plus fresh workplace bargaining guides to help

branches engage local employers. In September of 2021 saw the return of Green UNISON week gave activists the opportunity to publicise the union's work on green public services and build awareness for Cop26 in November in Glasgow. Once again, our members rose to the challenge to highlight green issues in their workplaces.

In 2022 the Green Rep or Environmental Officer became a rulebook position in UNISON. This move shows the commitment that UNISON and its membership has to environmental concerns. This led to third Green Week in the autumn of 2022. UNISON Also commissioned a report called 'UNISON members, climate change the green economy and just transition.'

The report was based on a survey of members and reveals the extensive role the union can play in addressing climate change issues.

The report also addresses the question of who holds the most responsibility to address climate change. UNISON members appear to believe that, in order, it is the government, then businesses, then individuals, then community groups and organisations.

In summarising the report, Sampson Low, head of UNISON's policy unit, said: "Climate denial is no longer the issue – the issue is the urgent need for climate action. This challenge unites us as a union and gives us an emotional drive to engage with the green agenda as a workplace and public service union."

How is this relevant to LGBT+ members? As stated in our motion, climate change disproportionately affects our communities due to marginalisation and discrimination. LGBT+ people are more likely than the general population to be homeless, putting them at



greater risk from extreme weather. Discrimination also means we may not be able to safely access emergency support.

Friends of Earth, Scotland state "Anti-capitalism has long been important to many in the fight for queer liberation. We recognise that capitalism rewards conformity and punishes diversity. It threatens diversity of gender and sexuality in the same way it threatens biodiversity in its quest for profit." They go on to say "When it comes to the fight against climate change, the LGBT+ community has so much to offer. We have a history of fighting for survival. We are trained for this fight. We may not always be perfect, but our history shows we know how to struggle and win, we know how to build resilient communities and care for one another, and we know what solidarity looks like."

We have a long history of protest. Pride is still a protest. We can use and share our skills of activism to help our environments, urban and rural.

Find out if your Branch has a Green or Environmental Rep. If they do, ask to meet with them as look for joint working. If they don't, they see if that is something you could take on and look at joint ventures with your Branch LGBT+ officer. The role of the environment rep is much needed in every branch and can further LGBT+ visibility at the same time.

[www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/02/REPORT-UNISON-Climate-change-pdf.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/02/REPORT-UNISON-Climate-change-pdf.pdf)

# At home

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Joe Purple-Yellow

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*Trigger warning due to themes of trauma, non-consent and suicide.*

**“The story I grew up with was that when I was in the womb, a smart doctor took a look through the ultrasound device, he swore I was going to be a boy. But when I was born, I turned out to be a girl. How incredibly happy my parents were with this surprise, as they both really wanted a little girl.**

Things took quite a drastic turn when I was about twelve, as there was no sign of a female puberty. I ended up in the national healthcare system's gynaecologist service for female children. I don't remember whether the referral came from the school nurse, or from family or from my GP at that time.

A thorough examination started, including both physical checks and taking blood samples, in my family's presence. Right after the very first few glances, the doctor said that my body hair pattern was abnormal for a girl. That it was 'way too much'. Well, I kinda thought that I had a lot of hair on my body compared to the other lasses at dance class, but it somehow made me feel proud that I had. Actually, when I was about seven, having full control for the first time over what kind of haircut I wanted at the hairdresser, I immediately said that I wished to have short

hair, like my dad's! Results from the hormone tests also confirmed what was in my behaviour; my testosterone levels were too high for a girl at my age. I had a boyish personality and since nursery school I was interested in girls. I also loved to go and discover the world with male peers, discuss our findings, feel like true explorers! My universe made total sense to me, it was in my kind of harmony.

But that was not acknowledged. When I was dancing with one of the little boys at nursery school events – that was applauded and photographed. When I was wearing a dress and a bow in my hair – that was praised and captured. The strong camaraderie with some of my male friends was gradually taken away from me. Usually after I was asked, either by their mother or mine, whether I had romantic feelings for a male friend and when I said no... I just noticed that I was not able to see them as much as before and other activities were recommended for me to do, instead of hanging out with them.

The specialist doctor sent me out of the exam room for quite a while and I still recall how hard and cold that white vintage wooden bench felt under me, sitting alone on it in the waiting area. I stared at the door from time to time, with the

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*The intersex flag, consisting of an open purple circle in a rectangular yellow field.*







sign Minor Females' Gynaecologist on it and I asked myself, silently, just within: 'What am I doing here?' It was all so alien, serious and stern. It did not make sense. I had a feeling I was about to be robbed. When I was eventually called back to the room, a lengthy discussion took place with an adult relative of mine present. I was told that I will have to take a pill each day for a long time, and that will help me to start to have periods. I think the only question I was asked, after the physical examination concluded, and before this scene, was: 'Do you want to have children?' It was a vague question, my family member was standing there, I was twelve, raised partly in a religious environment, so I answered 'Yes. I guess'. I liked the idea of a loving, warm, busy home, sometime in my future. I did not make the connection that what the doctor meant was me getting pregnant, giving birth, one day, in the future. So, I took a pill a day of some sort of progesterone and my journey to hell began.

At first, everything seemed to be as it was before. I continued to have my rich body hair, which I loved, but there was an increasing pressure on me from grown up females around me to learn to use the epilator, the little hand device that removes it. I did not want to, but they told me if I do it, the outcome will look very pretty. Needless to say, those delicate devices for biological females were not designed for my 'fur coat' and I screamed a lot, feeling like I wanted to cry each time. But each time, after it was done, first by my mother, then I was encouraged to do it by myself, I was told that my legs looked beautiful. Those comments felt good, about me suddenly being good enough, since the longer I was taking the hormone pills, the more depressed and anxious I was becoming. I felt frustrated most of the time (like I had an unceasing mild headache,

enough to be annoying), my mood started to swing from one extreme to the other, finally resulting in me having suicidal thoughts. I was taken to a neurologist-psychiatrist for children and, following several physical examinations and various tests, I was prescribed mood enhancers, antidepressants, in effect. I do not recall that me being made to take hormone pills at twelve was ever discussed with me in the specialist's office.

After answering a bunch of questions, I was asked to wait outside, again: alone. Time to time I was looking at the door with the psychiatrist's name on it, only a floor above the room where it was decided that I had too much body hair for a girl, some years ago, and I was wondering 'Will this ever end?'. About a year and some months after the first progesterone pill, incredibly painful, irregular and emotionally torturous periods presented themselves. Female kind of breasts started to form. My face appeared more round shaped, the pitch of my voice shifted higher. As soon as the mentioned gynaecologist found the results satisfactory, she then asked me to take contraceptive pills – I was told it will help to make my periods nicely regular... But I couldn't handle that emotionally at all, it was too much and my suicidal urges became more frequent and pressing. So, instead, my family sent me to a homeopathic practitioner, then to a kinesiologist, then to a second homeopathic doctor, to make that 'regular' happen and my intense acne ceased. I do not recall the issue of my periods being medically induced in the first place, against high testosterone levels, was ever on the agenda, so to say. I was a hairy teen who suddenly also had breasts, and who wished to be dead on most days. I couldn't find or make friends anymore. I pulled through every day in what felt like a dark emotional prison cell.



Looking back, I have no idea how I survived, and then having to live decades appearing, behaving and acting, speaking like a typically feminine female. When I was a teen, I was told by a female relative and by her female friends, how I should dress, then later that I should really start to date boys now, and so forth. It never worked out, obviously. It was like I was asked to see something else in them. I thought, I hoped, it would be just like a very long version of when I used to have those wonderful Lego building sessions with my male friends. But now they wanted different things from me and it ended in trauma and abuse, again and again. If it wasn't for my Christian faith and some helpful adults outside of my family, I doubt I would be here today. Thankfully, my periods began to significantly decrease very early on as an adult, and I began to piece things together. That is how I came across what intersex meant and my general practitioner was really helpful when last year I opened up a conversation with them about the non-consented hormone treatments I was victim of, long ago, in another life.

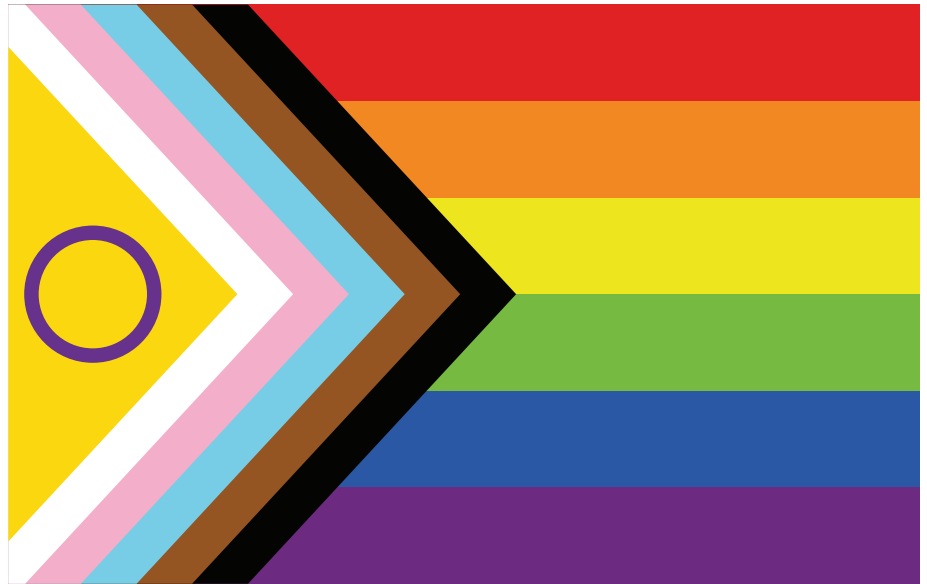
With their help, I now live almost completely period-free and intense counselling work helps me come to terms with losing so many years from my story. It also feels good to reconnect with my original self and leave unhelpful people behind. I have a long wait to bear until I can start to take testosterone or even begin to discuss some surgeries I'd desire, due to waiting lists. Processing other intersex individuals' stories I understand that in the past healthcare systems were attempting, in their reading, to 'fix' children like I was. They did not mean bad, back then they believed that what they thought to be 'early correction' was leading to complication-free adulthood for us. On many occasions they followed the parents' wishes.

Physicians' views in that era, on children's agency were limited at best, and the use of drugs that would postpone puberty was not habitual. Therefore my forgiveness-journey of healing has been and will remain a complex one. Where does the blame go?

I've never met (yet) another intersex person in real life and that is also because some of us had surgeries as a baby – those people, likely, will never find out the truth. I consider myself lucky, to remember things and the pills I had to take, because it meant being able to come to a possibly helpful conclusion when my periods decreased at an age younger than usual for a biological females' menopause. I never felt they belonged to me, nor I ever understood why I had to go through all those pills to get them in the first place. I did not understand why I was encouraged not to visit my male friends anymore as a teen, why I was so pushed to shave my legs, to wear more feminine clothing, to date a boy. Today I am a hairy adult who, for now, has breasts but who wishes to be dead on much less days than before. My perception of myself though is still more of a medical monster rather than a whole human being, as a result of years of tinkering with hormones, my body being the laboratory. I am working on feeling better, I am praying to have even more strength – and write a new chapter.

I am told that I can be part of LGBT+ circles. My relating to some of the letters of 'LGBT' is just as ambiguous as perhaps theirs towards the letters now following 'LGBT' (What are they doing there? Why were they added to us in the first place? etc.). It is the challenge of needing to embrace something new. Something unknown. Believe you me, I want to be part of 'LGBT+' only as much as LGBT people want to be part of 'LGBT' in their worst moments of being bullied, harassed,

*The updated Progress Pride Flag that features the purple and yellow intersex flag as well on its left side, since 2021.*



belittled or unacknowledged in society for being LGBT. But here we are, tied together by some mystical judgement that decided we are One Big Family, even if my local LGBT+ centre's first reaction to me reaching out to them was: 'Not sure we deal with that'. The 'that' was: intersex persons.

It took me time to finalise this article; flashbacks were coming and going. Even when I write my desired pronouns somewhere, he/him, I often have to stop. Because it is suddenly too much. I find myself sitting in that doctor's examination room again, suddenly hearing about things that are 'wrong' with me. There are days when I don't want to face things at all, so I just don't write my pronouns. Then I write them again and rejoice. I have had recurring dreams in which I tried my hardest to be a girl, a woman, only to be accepted by others. So where's the hope in all this? – one would ask. I am asking that too in these moments. To me, hope is in the fact that I am still here, sharing. Most people out there have no idea what intersex is. Time to change that.

Further hope I find in my vision that one day, in the future, an intersex person can walk into an LGBT+ centre or an event and they will be understood, recognised and known-about.

How intersex conditions manifest, how doctors dealt with it in the past. That many of us come with huge trauma-packages induced by the healthcare system itself. And how good it is to feel at home, at last. This was my first Christmas, being mostly out as an intersex male, and as a member of a new church congregation (I did not think the previous one was safe even to mention intersex.)

The colours of the intersex flag (2013) are, coincidentally, the same colours one gets on the skin after being bruised and beaten. Purple, yellow.

I want the punches to stop. And for 'LGBT plus' to not be 'LGBT minus'.



# 2023 UNISON LGBT+ Conference

The 2023 UNISON LGBT+ conference takes place in Liverpool on 10 – 12 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 United Kingdom?

Any full UNISON LGBT+ member can apply to their branch to attend. If you are interested in attending, 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](http://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/2023-LGBT+-conference](http://unison.org.uk/events/2023-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. 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 2024, members to be on the 2024 LGBT+ conference standing orders committee and members of UNISON’s delegation to the 2024 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

- 21 July**  
Deadline for submission of motions
- 11 August**  
Preliminary agenda published
- 17 August**  
Deadline to register delegate
- 20 September**  
Deadline for amendments to motions / motions to other conferences
- 20 September**  
Deadline for nominations
- 31 August**  
Deadline to register for reasonable adjustments such as large print
- 13 October**  
Final agenda published

## Our upcoming network meetings

In the lead up to UNISON’s LGBT+ conference, we hold meetings for bi, trans, non-binary and gender diverse, Black LGBT+ and disabled LGBT+ members. These meetings will be hybrid meetings, so you can either join with us in the UNISON centre or online using teams. Our network 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.

- **Bi plus members meeting**  
Friday 7 July 10.30am – 1.00pm
  - **Trans, non-binary and gender diverse members meeting**  
Friday 7 July 2.00 – 4.30pm
  - **Black LGBT+ members meeting**  
Saturday 9 September  
11am – 1.30pm
  - **Disabled LGBT+ members meeting**  
Thursday 7 September  
2.00 – 4.30pm
- For more information about all of the network meetings please contact [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk)

## Retired member delegate to 2023 UNISON LGBT+ conference

UNISON’s national retired members’ organisation is seeking two representatives to attend the 2023 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 [retired@unison.co.uk](mailto:retired@unison.co.uk) or by post to National Retired Members Officer, UNISON, 130 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AY to arrive no later than Tuesday 08 August 2023.

The statements will be considered by retired LGBT+ members attending the meeting for LGBT+ retired members at the Retired Members Conference in October. Successful applicants will be advised no later than 06 October.