

EQUALITY MATTERS



SELF ORGANISED GROUPS

Issue 7 January 2017



If you didn't stick to last year's resolutions, you have another opportunity to try again. Let's continue to encourage and support each other, whilst working towards achieving fairness and equality for all. Small steps lead to big results.

Don't forget the Manchester Branch AGM is to be held on 6 February, 1.30pm and 5pm, at the Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street. Further details are inside.

Thanks for your articles and comments.

Sonia Stewart
Branch Equality Officer

Branch Annual General Meeting

**6 February
2017,
1.30pm and
5.00pm
Friends'
Meeting
House,
Mount Street,
Manchester,
M2 5NS**

**Further details
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**Special points
of interest in
Issue 7:**

Branch AGM

**Trade Union
Act 2016**

**Gender pay-
gap reporting**

**Disabled
Members'
Conference**

Branch News

Manchester Branch AGM

The AGM is an important part of the democracy of the Branch and is our ultimate decision making body. Whilst day to day organising and running of the Branch is undertaken by the Branch Officers and overseen by the Branch Executive Committee, it is the AGM if it's quorate (minimum number of members attending), where our members get a chance to set Branch policy and agree important items like the Finance and Branch Development Plans for the coming year.

This year there are two meetings to choose from, both at Friends' Meeting House on Monday 6 February at 1.30pm or 5pm. We have invited Andy Burnham to the meeting at 1.30pm to hear what plans he has, if he is elected as Mayor for Greater Manchester.

This will give us an opportunity to hear more about GM Devolution and to ask him some questions about his priorities.

We are hoping to get an education related speaker for the 5pm meeting, as we are hoping to get some of our members from schools along.

It would be great to see you at the AGM, so please remember to make a note in your diary and watch out for more details in the post and via email in the New Year.

Evelyn Doyle
Branch Secretary
Manchester UNISON

Trade Union Act 2016 – Strike Ballot Rules

Five sets of regulations tabled in Parliament in December 2016, will be debated in January 2017. The threshold (40%) relates to 'important public services' and expected to be effective from 1 March 2017 (or 21 days after the regulations are made, if that happens later).

Draft regulations in relation to new opt-in rules for trade union political funds were also tabled. The transition period for new rules will be a minimum of 12 months and expected to be effective from 29 February 2018.

Workplace Stress

A recent TUC study shows workplace stress to be higher in the public sector and among the top 5 workplace hazards. Stress has been found to be on the rise across the United Kingdom, with an 11% increase to 78% in the North since 2014.

Stress in the private sector was found to be 63%. The highest increase in relation to stress is in Ireland (up 13% to 78%).

The other hazards are bullying/harassment, overwork, back strains and long hours at work.

According to sector, the main hazards causing concern in Local Government are: stress; bullying/harassment and violence (all with increases over the last 2 years).

In particular, violence is up from 26% to 47%.

Workplace Stress

“It’s in no-one’s interests to have overstretched workforces....Stress is preventable if staff have reasonable workloads, supportive managers and a workplace free from violence, bullying and harassment....” (Frances O’Grady, TUC General Secretary).

Ethical Care Charter

Since being launched by UNISON in 2012, several Local Authorities have signed up to the Ethical Care Charter.

The Ethical Care Charter is about improving pay, training and working standards and is what Councils should adhere to when commissioning homecare services.

Harassment at Work

UNISON has produced an updated guide on ‘Harassment at Work’.

Workplace bullying is defined by UNISON as being:

‘persistent offensive, intimidating, humiliating behaviour, which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees’.

The Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as being “unwanted conducted related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating

an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual”.

UNISON’s guidelines stress the importance of confidentiality when cases of bullying and harassment are reported, otherwise employees may be prevented from reporting such cases.

The union advises on the important role union representatives have and the steps Branches can take to raise awareness of workplace bullying and harassment. Details are provided of UNISON’s ‘Model dignity at work policy: preventing harassment and bullying at work’.

Reference is also made to TUC research ‘Still just a bit of banter? Sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016’.

UNISON has invited comments from Branches on the updated guide.

Skills for Strength Convention 2017

This year’s Skills for Strength convention will be held on 11 March at the Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester. Tickets are free to UNISON activists. Expenses for travelling to the event will need to be claimed from your local branch.

Workshops on the day will cover a diverse range of topics, with guests from the UK trade union movement, as well international guests.

To register for the event go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/skills-for-strength-2017-tickets-28942172818>.

Brexit

A deadline for invoking Article 50 is 31 March, as set by the Prime Minister. The process involves notifying the European Council of Britain's intention.

However, the Supreme Court would first be expected to make a ruling as to whether or not an Act of Parliament is required to trigger the Article. Negotiations to exit will then take another 2 years, following Article 50 being triggered.

Employment law changes, following exit, could include Working Time Regulations, Agency Workers' Rights and Right to Work.

Gender Pay-Gap Reporting

From April 2017, under the new law, large employers (250 or more employees) have to publish mean and median gender pay gaps.

Publications of reports are due in April 2018, covering the period from April 2017 to April 2018. Information published will include the payment of any bonuses, for the 12 month period ending April 2017. This cannot be ignored by employers.

'While there is no obligation for companies to explain the gender pay gap nor any duty to address it if a company is complying with the Equality Act, a failure to do so may lead to a heavy amount of adverse publicity.

Furthermore, the best candidates may not be attracted to working for companies with a big gender pay gap if they feel that their

gender will adversely impact on their career prospects.'

Data Protection Changes

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), although passed in May 2016, doesn't come into effect until May 2018.

However, due to the scale of changes, employers should be preparing for the changes in 2017, as the changes will be effective before we exit the EU.

Failure to comply with the changes will incur heavy fines.

National Minimum Wage/National Living Wage

The National Living Wage will increase on 1 April to £7.50 per hour.

In relation to the National Minimum Wage, a 'name and shame' policy has been introduced by the government, for employers paying below the National Minimum Wage.

Source: HR News

New Surveys

The TUC is conducting a new survey into diversity/equality at work and also an online Racism at Work survey '...to expose the everyday reality of racism', due to the rise in racism.

'...employers should be preparing for the changes...'

'employers ...have to publish mean and median gender pay gaps...'

SOGs' Contacts

Disabled Members

Women

The Manchester Branch Women's SOG continues to build on its membership.

The group meets regularly, supports and encourages members to be active, particularly within the group and Branch.

The next meeting of the group will be in January and the Annual General Meeting will be held on 9 March 2017.

Contact: Marion Doherty
Email m.doherty@manchester.gov.uk

Black Members

Get in touch with Damian Daley if you would like to be involved in the Black Members SOG and help to shape the group's work programme over the next 12 months.

Contact: Damian Daley
Email d.daley1@manchester.gov.uk

Disabled Members

For queries about the Disabled Members' SOG and how to get involved in supporting disabled members.

Contact: Lorna Young
Email l.young@manchester.gov.uk

UNISON National Disabled Members Conference
29-31 October 2016, Brighton

Delegate: Paul Mittler
Disabled Members' SOG

Although this was my first UNISON Conference that I had ever attended, I found it an interesting and worthwhile experience. Several motions were discussed at the Disabled Members Conference.

Bullying and Harassment, Violence and Sickness

A report was received saying that disabled employees were still being bullied, harassed and were suffering greatly, simply because of their impairment or disability. In instances where disabled staff had requested a phased return to work after not being well, employers were still denying this. Many cited "operational reasons" while some employers claimed that they simply did not know what a phased return to work was.

There were several case histories presented to Conference, including people with cancer where a phased return to work might have been beneficial, but employers were still denying their staff the possibility of a phased return to work.

Research from Cardiff University has also indicated that 21% of workers with a learning difficulty were subjected to violence in the workplace. This compared to 10% for workers who had other disabilities or impairments. Several delegates questioned how this could be allowed to happen and some people called for a campaign to raise the issues. There was a call from the Disabled Members Conference for UNISON to campaign on these issues.



“....21% of workers with a learning difficulty were subjected to violence in the workplace...”

Disabled Members

As a result of hearing these speeches, the National Disabled Members Conference passed the following motion:

"The Conference notes with great concern the high number of disabled workers who are experiencing bullying and harassment at work. The Conference notes that research by The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development highlighted the fact that 37% of disabled workers had experienced bullying and harassment, compared with 18% of non disabled workers. This was backed up by Unison's Scottish Young Members Committee, who carried out a survey that suggested that 50% of disabled respondents had experienced bullying and harassment, compared to 39% of those without a disability."

The Conference, therefore, passed a motion that would require UNISON to:

"Produce Information in accessible formats that is for disabled members at work relating to bullying and harassment about what UNISON can do and what support is available.

Develop a campaign which highlights the mental health impacts on the effects of bullying and harassment on disabled workers."

This pack will be used by UNISON branches.

From the various Motions that were passed at the Conference, it was also abundantly clear that there was a great deal of concern

Disabled Members

about Human Resources issues. From what was being said at the Conference, it was clear that some employers in the Public Sector had very little idea of what a 'Disability Leave' policy was, what "reasonable adjustments" were, and so on. An example of this could mean that 'sick leave' due to an employee's disability or impairment was often inappropriately classified as 'sickness absence'. This may lead to some disabled people facing disciplinary or capability action.

Although some disabled people may be entitled to 'disability leave', this can still prompt or trigger the employer to use the 'sickness absence' policy against disabled people. Some disabled employees may experience a lack of support and understanding and they are often working when they are not fit to do so, through the fear of dismissal.

As a result, the Conference called upon the Disabled Members Committee to work with service groups and sector committees to produce consistent policies and encourage the encouragement of disability policies.

Encourage the Adoption of 'Disability Leave' by Employers in the Public Sector.

I was also encouraged by the publication of a Toolkit about Mental Health. This had specifically been written by the UNISON Young Workers Group and there were calls for the Disabled Members Committee to raise awareness of mental health issues. The Regional Disabled Members Groups should have access to the Tool Kit on Mental Health Issues.

"..some employers in the Public Sector had very little idea of what a 'Disability Leave' policy was, what "reasonable adjustments" were..."

"..encouraged by the publication of a Toolkit about Mental Health."

In Conclusion

The rest of the Conference was given over to a discussion of motions that had been previously submitted to the Conference.

This may have been the first time that I had been to a UNISON Conference, but I was rather surprised that all the motions seemed scrutinised by the UNISON National Disabled Members Committee, before being presented to the delegates at Conference.

The National Disabled Members Committee also seemed to have determined their position on a particular motion before the Conference started. I felt personally that this restricted time for debate, which I would have liked to see more of.

Community**BME Women's Group**

A new BME Women's group has been set up in Wythenshawe. Drop in to learn about empowerment, awareness and improving mental health, as well as making new friends.

The group meets every Monday 12noon – 2pm at Wythenshawe Safespots, Alderman Downward House, Wythenshawe Town Centre, M22 5RF. Contact: Saheli 0161 945 4187/0161 877 1321 info@saheli.org.uk

January**20-22**

National Black Members Conference
Brighton

February**1**

Learning in a Changing World
London

1

LGBT History Month

6-12

Hate Crime Awareness Week

16-18

National Women's Conference
Brighton

March**8**

International Women's Day

11

Skills for Strength Convention
Manchester

22

Race Charter Launch "Keeping Race Equality on the Agenda"
Liverpool

31

Transgender Day of Visibility
International Seminar
Croyde Bay

April

7

World Health Day

28

International Workers' Memorial Day

June

18-19

Local Government Conference

Brighton

20-23

National Delegates Conference

Brighton

International Men's Day (IMD)

International Men's Day is an annual event celebrated on 19 November and observed by over 70 countries, including England, where the event was inaugurated by students from the University of Kent, who celebrated the day on campus.

IMD is informally viewed as a male counterpart of International Women's Day (8 March) and relates to Father's Day (June). It also relates to Universal Children's Day (20 November), forming a 48 hour celebration of men and children.

The day highlights discrimination against men and boys as well as their achievements and contributions to community, family, marriage and child care.

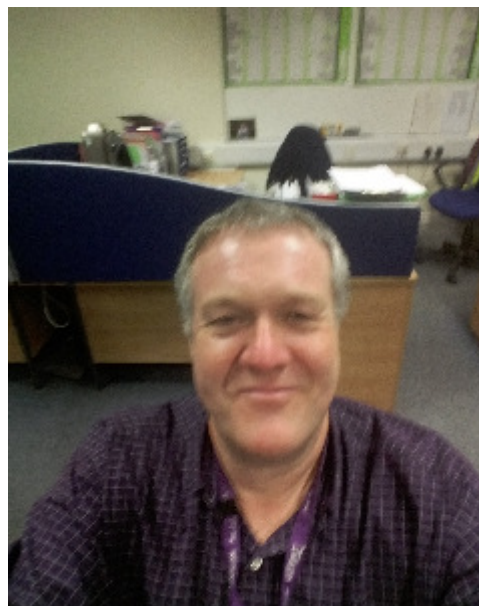
Objectives

- Focusing on men and boy's health
- Improving gender relations
- Promoting gender equality
- Highlighting male role models

Ways of celebrating the day include:

- Public seminars
- Classroom activities at schools
- Radio and television programmes
- Debates
- Panel discussions
- Award ceremonies
- Art displays.

How will you celebrate International Men's Day 2017?

Who Are You?**Edward Redmond****What is your day role?**

My role is that of a full time UNISON elected officer.

What's your ideal job and why?

To be honest, I feel that I am in my ideal job. I am doing what I have done from the age of 16, when I became a union activist in my first job.

"The union is the collective voice of the workers..."

Edward Redmond

How long have you been a UNISON member?

I have been a UNISON member since it was formed.

I was in NALGO prior to that.

What does UNISON mean to you?

The union is the collective voice of the workers and therefore extremely important to me, as it is to all our members.

What are your interests away from work?

My interests away from work are varied.

I enjoy working on my allotment and cooking some of the produce.

I also enjoy watching the occasional football match and being with my granddaughters.

Who is your role model and why?

I do not have one particular role model.

I think my life experiences and people have influenced me in some positive and negative ways.

Mohammad Nizami



What is your day role?

I am the Deputy Manager of M-four translation at Manchester City Council.

My main role involves managing translators, dealing with all the written translation requests and liaising with customers. In addition I negotiate the price, deadlines, quality control and ensure the service is delivered on time.

What's your ideal job and why?

My ideal job would be to work for the United Nations and travel around the world to gain a deeper insight into other cultures, religions and way of life.

I am also interested in global history, tradition and heritage which I think can be better explored at the very heart of each society.

“Sometimes disputes centre on lack of knowledge, ignorance and stereotyping. In such cases UNISON has played a very positive and constructive role.”

How long have you been a UNISON member?

Day one when I joined Sheffield City Council in May 1987.

What does UNISON mean to you?

UNISON has played a significant role for me as a member. I must say that employers are not always right or fair.

In my experiences, sometimes employers don't understand the real problems of communities in relation to cultural and linguistic issues. Now Britain is a multi - cultural, multi lingual and multi faith community.

Sometimes disputes centre on lack of knowledge, ignorance and stereotyping.

In such cases UNISON has played a very positive and constructive role. I think UNISON needs to play further in its work within Manchester City Council, for its members working in the field of interpreting and translations, which is part of overall Equality.

Do you have a role within the union eg steward/convenor?
No**What are your interests away from work?**

I really enjoy travelling and writing about the history, cultural heritage and the social issues of the places I have travelled around Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

I have written 6 travelogues and two books about the history of Asian immigrants in the UK.

Also every week I write a column for the Urdu newspaper Daily Jang London and regularly write the articles for Urdu magazines of Indo-Pak sub-continent.

Who is your role model and why?

As a writer, my role model is Mahmood Hashmi, a well known literature personality and founder of the first Urdu newspaper, Mashreq, in the UK. He started in April 1961.

I also admire Atul Ramanuj, a person with a very clear vision and great knowledge of languages and their cultural background.

In his role as the Head of Translation Services at Manchester City Council, Atul has put all his expertise in practice, leading the department to generate its income for the Council.

As a result of this, we have survived for the last 25 years, even though other such translation services across the country were closed down.

EQUALITY MATTERS is also at www.unisonmanchester.org

Deadline for comments and articles to be submitted for Issue 8 of this Newsletter is Friday, 17 March 2017.

Comments and articles to be emailed to: s.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk
