

EQUALITY MATTERS



Issue 11 - June 2018

So much happening right now, we sometimes forget that colleagues need our support as much, if not more in some cases, as we need theirs. Take time to give support where required and let's continue to work together for equality for all.

Your articles and comments are always welcome.

Sonia Stewart
Branch Equality Officer

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

New GDPR Regulations in place from 25 May 2018.

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Special points of interest in Issue 11:

Violence at work

Challenging racism in the workplace

Self-Organised Groups

Skills for Strength

Making devolution work for women

News

Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has taken effect since 25 May 2018. This Regulation has stricter rules in relation to data including:

- How data is processed, stored and shared
- Updating policies
- Organisations having a Data Protection Officer in place.

Gender Pay Reporting

Over 1,000 organisations did not publish their gender pay gaps by the required deadline, an indication they are not taking the matter seriously and place less value on women in the workplace. They could now face legal action for non-compliance.

From those that did comply, (10,000), 78% were found to have pay gaps which were to the advantage of male workers.

Sexual Harassment

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), in carrying out research into sexual harassment at work, found that action was only taken by employers for 1 in 4 cases, where workers complained of sexual harassment.

The research, entitled 'Turning the tables: ending sexual harassment at work', was conducted between 2017 and 2018.

News

The EHRC is calling on employers to:

- Publish their sexual harassment policies

For the government to have a:

- New mandatory duty for employers and statutory code of practice to "require all employers to take effective steps to prevent and respond to sexual harassment"

and that Acas:

- "develop targeted sexual harassment training for managers, staff and workplace sexual harassment 'champions' to support employers in achieving change".

National Minimum Wage

Some employers are still found not to be paying the national minimum wage to workers, as they are obliged to do. The National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 apply.

Those employers, amounting to 179, have been named by the government. Even a non-intentional breach of the regulations can incur a fine.

Anxiety

Research by RADA in Business found women to be "37% more likely to experience workplace anxiety than men when negotiating a pay rise, and 39% more likely to feel nervous in a job interview...".

Opportunities, in addition to line managers taking an interest in the career progression of women employees, will help to improve confidence. So, looking at positive action from employers and not just making assumptions that women are not competent enough.

Windrush

People from Commonwealth countries who arrived in this country as British citizens, in the late 1940s/early 1970s (known as the Windrush generation), who were invited to do so to help rebuild the country, have been subjected to disgraceful racist treatment by the Government, including being threatened with deportation, incarcerated, denied medical assistance and unable to travel.

Having been invited to help rebuild the country, worked hard, paid taxes, insurance etc, only to be treated as illegal immigrants and made to jump through endless hoops in order to prove they have a legal right to be here. The fact they came here as British citizens has conveniently been forgotten. In the meantime, the Government has destroyed the evidence! In addition, the buck is being passed from pillar to post, as to who is at fault.

Despite apologies and assurances from the Government that cases will be looked into and compensation paid, it's too late for some who have either passed away waiting, or too ill to benefit from it.

The Home Secretary has resigned but the problem created by the Government remains unresolved for the Windrush generation. The number of people wrongfully detained is still 'unknown' and for those wrongfully deported, the figures, originally given as 'a handful' continue to increase.

Currently, a call for evidence process is running until 8 June 2018. This relates to the Government providing redress for financial losses and is seen as the first step. Update: The number of detainees won't be known until mid July.

Stephen Lawrence

The Government has agreed to a national day on 22 April annually in memory of Stephen Lawrence, who was murdered at the age of 18, because he was Black, in 1993.

UNISON has continued to help in campaigning for justice over several years.

Health and Wellbeing

Mental Health Awareness Week

14 to 20 May was Mental Health Awareness Week, with organisations holding staff events, not only to raise awareness of mental health issues, but to encourage people to talk about their experiences and signpost to where they can get access to professional assistance.

Stress and lack of rest: Stress has been found to be one of the key factors in mental health problems. Another disrupter appears to be lack of rest, affecting moods and which is linked to feelings of loneliness. It's recommended that activities after 10pm should be discouraged, including the use of mobile phones.

A survey carried out by MIND, the mental health charity, found that 1 in 4 people feel overwhelmed and unable to cope, as a result of stress.

Training: Some companies are failing to offer appropriate mental health training for managers (17% of those surveyed). This is despite there being a rise in employees (now 4 in 10), speaking about their mental health concerns to managers.

Fresh Air and Personalisation

A study looking at how much time we spend at our workstations compared to the amount of fresh air we get, found that almost half those surveyed (40%) spent more time at their workstations. We apparently only get about 15 minutes of fresh air during the working day, apart from commuting.

We also want to be able to personalise our workstation, something many organisations no longer allow. Reasons given were that staff felt more productive and less stressed.

Presenteeism and Absenteeism

One of the causes said to be associated with long term sickness absence is presenteeism. This is when people who are unwell still present themselves for work, which during the last 12 months has been found to be as much as 86% of staff, according to a CIPD and Simplyhealth survey.

Leavism, when people work during their annual leave has also been found to be a problem that's on the increase.

The survey by Health and Wellbeing at Work found that organisations don't appear to be tackling this, as indicated by 27% of people who responded.

Are you a Carer?

Are you caring for a relative, friend or neighbour and need advice and support? To receive advice and support for what you do in that role please telephone 0161 234 5001 and speak to a contact officer.

Free courses are also available for carers to take up. To find out more about the courses, which include healthy eating and first aid, telephone 0161 834 6069, Manchester Carers Network, or go to:

www.manchestercarersnetwork.org.uk/events.

LGBT+ Retention

According to research from PwC and Out Leadership, some LGBT+ staff don't feel that they receive enough support from their employer. Less than 15% are aware of LGBT+ programmes specifically around retention of LGBT+ talent within their organisation.

That is in spite of almost 60% of employers surveyed saying they "...take steps to create a pathway to senior management for LGBT+ people."

In addition, 85% of LGBT+ staff who were high-performing said they felt comfortable at work.

"For too many LGBT+ employees many organisations still feel closeted. This hinders not only the careers of LGBT+ professionals, but also means that organisations are missing out on talented people...." (Jon Terry, PwC).

Violence at Work

UNISON, following surveys of community sector members, has a Violence at Work Charter in place. The surveys found that members were increasingly being abused, both verbally and physically. UNISON defines violence at work as “Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.” This definition is in line with the Health and Safety Executive.

The union is keen to work with employers on measures to address the problem and for employers to show their commitment in doing so. The Violence at Work Charter Standards employers must meet include that:

-The employer has a written violence and aggression at work policy, which is available to all staff. The policy should also cover lone working.

-Measures are taken to reduce staff working in isolated buildings, offices or other work areas to a minimum.

-Where they are in place, union safety reps are able to access this data and are consulted on solutions to issues relating to violence in the workplace.

-Where appropriate, independent counselling services are available to staff who are the victims of violence at work.

Organisations signing up to the Charter so far include: Mencap; RNIB and Apex Housing Association.

Challenging Racism in the Workplace

UNISON’s work around challenging racism in the workplace includes, in addition to identifying key issues and supporting individuals:

- Training for Branch negotiators in relation to racism
- Moving away from dealing with racism on an individual basis to a collective basis
- Making sure tackling racism becomes business as usual for all UNISON members and activists, as well as ensuring UNISON actively promotes race equality in the workplace and wider community.

Black Members and Staff Development Project Board

This is a two year project, with the Board comprising Regional and National UNISON representatives. Remit of the Board is to:

- Identify and support Black members to improve participation in the Regional Black Members Committee, Annual Conference and wider union structures, regionally and nationally
- Support and develop Black members and activists to enable them to have the skills necessary to successfully apply to become an employee of the union
- Review and monitor application of the Race Discrimination Protocol and organise refresher training for organisers, branch officers and representatives.

Branch Women's Self Organised Group

National Women's Conference 1-3 February

Raise Our Banner High!

An exciting project to create a new banner for the Women's SOG takes place on the last two Saturdays in April at the People's History Museum. Manchester UNISON Branch Women SOG members are working with textile artist Helen Mather to design and create a banner that can be taken on demonstrations, events and marches.

It's a bespoke course which will result in a unique eye-catching banner that's practical, reflecting the group and pride we have in Manchester and its radical heritage. This follows discussions with members who said this was something they'd really like to do. The Branch helped to make it possible by providing the support and funding required.

This year is historic, with the 100th Anniversary of Suffrage for some women (with obvious links to Manchester), 150th Anniversary of the founding of the TUC in Manchester and 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the NHS, with the opening of the first NHS hospital just over the boarder at Trafford General. We have lots to raise our banner for in celebration, but there's lots of campaigning coming up, so the banner will see plenty of action almost immediately. The People's History Museum holds one of the largest collections of historic trade union and political banners in the world and is the UK's leading authority on the conservation and study of banners.

Delegates from the Manchester Branch Women's SOG attended this year's Conference. Despite the bitter cold on the Liverpool Docks, there was a warm welcome inside and overall, more than 800 women attended, a record turnout.

Conference is always very varied, with a wide range of issues being addressed and motions being put forward. This year was no different, however, there were some overarching themes, including inclusion, widening representation, and violence against women and girls.

The conference opened with a motion from Newcastle City Branch on Organising Amongst Low Paid Women Members. In a Union where three quarters of the membership are women, 49% of Branch Secretaries and 54% of Branch Chairs are men. Representation of low paid women, who make up 58% of the membership is low. The reasons are varied, but there are financial, social and cultural barriers.

Caring responsibilities and struggling with low pay, part-time hours and shift work, add to the burdens on many members who already struggle to juggle the hours in the day, with tasks life throws at them.

UNISON developed a toolkit in 2017 following motions at Conference in 2016 - 'Getting the Balance Right'. This year's event resolved to encourage Branches to implement the toolkit, produce more material aimed at engaging low paid members and to look at how to remove or alleviate as many barriers as possible.



Women's Conference

Some existing structural barriers are within the union and conference called for a rule change to create more general seats, rather than men's seats. Not to exclude men from standing, but increase opportunities for more women to do so. There were also calls to include Branch Women's Officer as a rule book post.

Lack of representation of Black and young women was also noted. Only 9 women aged under 27 attended this year's conference. Delegates supported a motion calling for promotional material that targets younger members and celebrates young women activists. Current young women activists will be invited to address the 2019 conference, to give ideas on how to involve more young people, remove barriers and increase understanding of union activity.

National Black Members Committee said whilst many women members are from Black backgrounds, very few are represented at Branch or National level, yet Black women are statistically more at risk of being selected for redundancy in times of austerity and more likely to suffer from other forms of discrimination in the workplace. Conference supported a motion calling for Branches to be more proactive in encouraging Black women's participation and help increase visibility of Black members.

A ground-breaking motion for non-binary inclusion raised by the National LGBT Committee, was one of the most thoroughly

Women's Conference

debated parts of the conference. Points were raised both for and against. The motion was supported and conference called on the National Women's Committee to raise awareness within women's SOGs, Branches, and regional women's groups. Also to promote the UNISON factsheet 'Gender Equality: Non-binary Inclusion'. This is a very new topic to many members and deserves greater space than this article affords, but the factsheet is available online via the national UNISON website.

Highlight of the event was key-note speaker, Dr Helen Pankhurst, great-granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, who has just published her book 'Deeds Not Words', that looks at how things have changed, or not, for women over the last 100 years since some women gained the right to vote. Dr Pankhurst talked about how feminist politics had changed over the years and her research into this. Broken into chapter themes ie politics, money, identity, violence, culture and social norms, conference was asked for a show of fingers to rate which of these had changed most for the better. Interestingly, the one thing that stood out quite starkly is that most women thought violence against women was unchanged or was the main issue. This reinforced concerns raised at conference that increasing violence and misogyny was being met with withdrawal of funding supporting safe spaces and sanctuary for women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Next year, Unison National Women's Conference will be held in Bournemouth. Support to attend for women active in the Women's Self Organised Group is available from the Branch.



International Women’s Day

International Women’s Day



8 March was International Women’s Day (IWD) and activities were held far and wide, in recognition of women’s achievements and struggles over the past 100 years. There was brilliant support, as the images show, with rosettes and sashes being proudly worn.

Well done to Lucia Passerini from HROD below (far left), who acquired the sashes and rosettes.



Age is no barrier!



Image by kind permission of Carl Greatbatch



Manchester Branch AGM

Thompsons Solicitors hosted a well-attended local event under the theme: ‘150 Years of Union Women! - Stories of the Past, Present and Future’.



Image courtesy of TUC & TUC Library

A ‘Walk for Women’ event was organised on 3 March, as a way of celebrating women’s progress.



The walk, starting at Central Library, ended at Castlefield Bowl, to a lively stage show.



Image courtesy of TUC & TUC Library

In the Branch



In representing, campaigning and challenging inequalities against women in areas such as: The gender pay gap, caring responsibilities; maternity rights; domestic abuse discriminatory policies and practices; reasonable adjustments and career progression.

In the Community



Supporting women in local communities, encouraging them to be visible and to have a voice.

Branch Black Members' Self Organised Group

The Black Members' SOG relaunched on 21 February 2018. Reasons for attending included: Concerns around working practices; underrepresentation, particularly at senior management level; inaction in resolving issues faced by Black people in the workplace; support and making an impact.

Key issues agreed over the next 12 months:

- Lack of Black senior managers in the workplace
- Pay
- Terms and Conditions

Agreed Charter:

- Challenging racism
- Helping to create an environment in which all our members can work to their full potential
- Campaigning for fair representation
- Ensuring the talents of Black members are recognised and utilised at all levels of the union and in the workplace
- Communicating with our Black members about the work of the Group and outcomes from their feedback
- Informing Black members of development opportunities notified to us
- Monitoring the development and progress of Black representation in the workplace, particularly at senior management level
- Monitoring the development and progress of Black representation within UNISON structures.

Contact Sonia Stewart
Branch Equality Officer

Branch Disabled Members' Self Organised Group

The UNISON Disabled Members' Self Organised Group (SOG) started meeting again in 2017. We meet quarterly in the Town Hall Extension.

We are a small, friendly group looking to attract new members. At the moment we are entirely composed of Manchester City Council staff, but the group is open to all members of the Manchester UNISON Branch.

We have agreed our focus for the next twelve months is to look at the issues of disability leave and also reasonable adjustments.

At our last meeting, we shared our experiences of sickness absence procedures. We are gathering ideas and suggestions which we will then ask the Manchester Branch of UNISON to take up on our behalf.

The group provides members with peer support and a safe environment to share openly and freely and our experiences and views. It is a place for disabled members to raise issues to take to the UNISON Branch for support.

New members are always welcome. Our next meeting is on 10 July 2018, 12.30pm to 1.30pm, Room 5006, Level 5, Town Hall Extension.

Contact Paul Mittler
(p.mittler@manchester.gov.uk) or

Ruth Burnham
r.burnham@manchester.gov.uk
for more details.

If you work outside of the Town Hall Complex, let us know you are coming so we can arrange a visitor's pass.



UNISON Skills for Strength Organising Convention

This year's Skills for Strength Organising Convention, held on 10 March at the Mechanics Institute, Manchester, attracted 160 activists from throughout the North West. One of the themes for the day was 'Opportunities for the Union Movement in 2018 and Beyond'.



The event was Chaired by Paula Barker, North West Regional Convenor and focused on 150 Years of the TUC, that was founded in Manchester on 2 June 1868.



Guest speakers from left: Sam Fairbairn, People's Assembly; Dr Lydia Hayes; Jo Platt MP; Paula Barker (Chair); Keven Nelson, Regional Secretary UNISON NW and Lynn Collins, TUC North West Regional Secretary

Lynn Collins recounted inspirational stories by four women and a man, who were forces to be reckoned with over a period of time. They were:

- Jeannie Mole 1841-1912: Who started a campaign to unionise women workers. A plaque was due to be unveiled in Liverpool in her honour
- Jack Jones 1913-2009: Who fought fascism and went as far afield as Spain to do so
- Ellen Wilkinson 1891-1947: Who trained in the Mechanics Institute to be a Teacher (the Mechanics Institute was originally a teacher training college)
- Mary Macarthur 1880-1921: Who organised the Chain Makers Festival 'Bundle of Sticks', "...women are bound together and have the power of unity.." "An employer can do without one worker, he cannot do without all his workers."
- Mary Bamber 1874-1938: Who organised rope workers and laundry workers.

Dr Lydia Hayes: Author of 'Institute of Employment Rights'. Social care is in crisis, over 1m older people are not receiving care. Women are routinely exploited/denied benefits of legal entitlements. Many of them are not in a trade union. Opportunities for 2018: To use your union as a route to which care workers can stand up for themselves and their brave and innovative trade union leadership. Real change through UNISON.

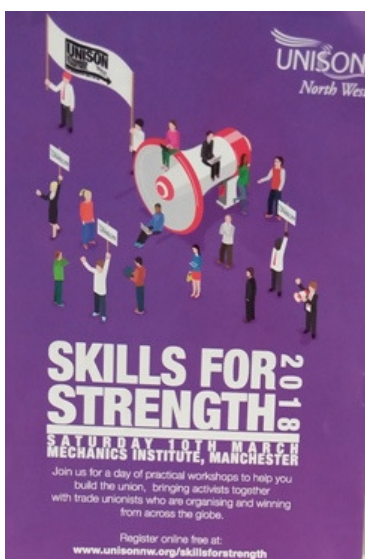
Jo Platt, MP: "...young people need a world class education too..." Ensure high quality qualifications to give real skills and investment for those who need it. Education and opportunity for all.

Sam Fairburn: Staff are stretched to breaking point in the NHS. We should go back to what the founding principles of the NHS were eg no outsourcing, properly paid staff and more money immediately. He also spoke of the growing housing crisis in relation to affordable homes.

Kevan Nelson: UNISON is on the journey to becoming an organising union. There were big successes and achievements in this region in 2017 such as:

- Recruitment of 22,773 members (up by 15%)
- Dignity and social care now being central to the political debate
- Attack on Docas: 107 main employers completed by us, ahead of deadline. The law is not yet enacted though!
- Roll out of training in April
- Projects, including a new project to be launched in October re: Under-fives
- Membership retention: Regional strategy being launched this month (March)
- Branch Structures Review 2017. Branches to think about: geographical level and development needs for every activist
- Collective action and mobilising: Seen excellent results but need to step up campaign on collective bargaining
- Dedicated team of organisers in place: To build power; generate real improvements; increase membership and raise expectation of members.

Building the union is not an end in itself, so we must avoid viewing the union in an abstract way. It's about fighting injustice and gaining improvements for members. "Stronger together, solidarity forever".



Workshops

Workshops on the day included:

- The power of "Worker Voice"- examples from social care
- A Tale of Two Universities, getting the vote out, winning for members
- In Place of Austerity-the alternative to austerity and how we get it.

Making Devolution Work for Women

Listening to Greater Manchester Women's Voices

This well attended seminar was organised by the Fawcett Society and held in April 2018 at the Manchester Metropolitan University. Participants were, in the main, from the Public as well as voluntary and community sectors. The Fawcett Society is a registered charity 'Campaigning for a society in which women and girls in all their diversity are equal and truly free to fulfil their potential'. This seminar formed part of the 'Making Devolution Work for Women' project, which is about the lack of women in power and discrimination.

This event, the first since launch of the Local Government Commission's findings on the Making Devolution Work for Women project, was about listening to women's voices from all walks of life with regard to priorities for Greater Manchester, including social care, child care, skills and transport, and which was Chaired by Sam Smethers, Chief Executive of the Fawcett Society. General discussions explored women's perspectives of life in Greater Manchester.

Table discussions centred on:

- Gender and transport in Greater Manchester
- Jobs, pay and skills
- Challenges women face in Greater Manchester
- Social care and child care

Images below show impromptu performances given by some women during the final session.



Making Devolution Work for Women

Listening to Greater Manchester Women's Voices



Calls to Action

Calls to action resulted in the agreement of four key priorities as the next steps:

- 1 The need for services to be shaped by the most inclusive services to women in Greater Manchester.
For example, women's needs are often not taken into consideration when services are being planned/reduced.
- 2 The need to raise the status and work of caring as a profession and in a domestic sphere - not just as 'women's work'.
For example, the work of carers is often taken for granted/value not recognised.
- 3 Work and skills: To end all forms of discrimination in the workplace and the world of work, to include normalising flexible working for all.
For example, women having to justify why flexible working should also apply to them.
- 4 Travel: To make travel by bus, tram, bike and foot affordable and in particular attention being paid to the needs of women and support required.
For example, women don't feel safe travelling on their own and are worried about the rising costs of public transport.

It was also agreed to have ten satellite events, with the aim of them being organised across Greater Manchester, as well as contacting policy makers on what/where changes should be made, to make things work better for women.

Guess Who?

Minding our own business
Going to our lunch
Who did we bump into
But Kriss Akabusi!

Supporting a good cause
We found as we drew near
We decided to pause
As it was about helping people
to hear

Not only was he charming
Engaging, cool and witty
Imagine our surprise
When he agreed to this picci!



Kriss Akabusi, Sonia Stewart and Sue Davison

Events

JUNE

16: University of Manchester Community Festival. Manchester Museum, University Place and Bridgford Street. 11am-4pm

17-18: Local Government Conference, Brighton

19-22: National Delegates Conference, Brighton

20: World Refugee Day

Windrush: Celebrating 70th Anniversary. National. Includes:

Events

17: Spirit of the Windrush Celebration - includes Manchester City Council Choir. Church of God of Prophecy Restoration House, Moss Side, M14 4SS. 3pm-5.30pm. Refreshments.

and
23: Greater Manchester NHS 70 & Windrush 70 Health Walk & Festival, Alexandra Park, M16 7JL
12noon – 5pm

23: Refugee World Cup & Family Fun Day, Albert Park, M7 1JF 10am-5pm

JULY

5: Celebrating 70th Birthday of the NHS. National.

18: Mandela Day. International

21: North West Regional Women's Committee Seminar, the Pankhurst Centre, M13 9WP 9.30am-4pm

AUGUST

1
Caribbean Day. National.

21: Eid al-Adha 1st day

23: Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

SEPTEMBER

11: Al-Hijra

11-13: Trades Union Congress Brighton

EQUALITY MATTERS is also at www.unisonmanchester.org
Deadline for comments and articles to be submitted for Issue 12 of this Newsletter is Friday, 10 August 2018.
Comments and articles to be emailed to: s.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk