

EQUALITY MATTERS



Issue 14 – January 2020

New decade. New aspirations. New challenges. We must continue to challenge all inequalities. Don't be silent or ignore as that gives approval to the situation. This is your time to make a difference.

Keep those articles and comments coming.

Sonia Stewart
Branch Equality Officer

Branch AGM

Friends
Meeting House
Mount Street
Manchester
M2 5NS

4 March
5.00pm
Meeting Room
F17

or

5 March
12.45pm
Main Hall

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Special points of interest in Issue 14:

Women's
Pensions
Campaign

New
Regulation

Community

News

Equal Pay

The recent equal pay employment tribunal case victory brought by Samira Ahmed, a BBC presenter, has prompted one legal practice to run workshops covering equal pay, to increase understanding of how far reaching equal pay claims can be.

Ms Ahmed's case was brought because she was being paid considerably less than a male presenter, whilst carrying out similar work.

Mental Health

According to a survey by Business in the Community 62% of managers put the interests of their organisation above staff wellbeing. However, supporting those with mental health by taking positive action is actually good business sense.

Suggestions for organisations creating a mentally health environment include:

- Taking a whole organisation approach eg building the right culture

- Ensuring a mental health and wellbeing strategy is properly implemented

- Creating an environment that encourages open conversations about mental health

- Giving staff the tools to support themselves

- Taking action.

News

Achieving Diversity

Lack of diversity in broadcasting is being highlighted, but working towards and achieving diversity within organisations doesn't just apply to the broadcasting corporation.

"Having role models of people in positions of power is important. We need to remember that individuals are changed by what they see."

Under 15's, a quarter of them BAME, are said to be the next generation – "to overlook them is to miss out".
(Alex Mahon, CEO, Channel 4)

"We know that people from BAME backgrounds often come from families where they are pushed to do their best and are often high achievers. But looking at research in both work and education, many are prevented from doing their best."
(Afolabi Sonaike, associate client, Korn Ferry consulting)

Minimum Wage

There is an increase in employee underpayment, however, fines are low for those employers who are underpaying, according to a Resolution Foundation report 'Under the wage floor'.

"The minimum wage has been one of the UK's biggest policy successes in recent decades, delivering much-needed pay rises to millions of low-paid workers. Its success is dependent on employers taking it seriously, with those firms paying it not being undercut by a minority that fail to do so."

News

Equality Act 2010

Ethical veganism is now entitled to protection under the Equality Act 2010, following an employment tribunal decision. The person asked that his belief in ethical veganism should be protected as a form of philosophical belief. For a belief to qualify for protection an individual must demonstrate:

- They have a genuinely-held belief
- That it relates to weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour, and
- That it is worthy of respect in a democratic society, but does not conflict with the rights of others.

The case that brought about this decision (the person's veganism went beyond a mere dietary choice or an opinion), is said to demonstrate that the situation faced by employers could be highly problematic given how difficult it is to identify what might qualify as a protected philosophical belief and what does not.

Sexual Harassment

Over 30 organisations, including UNISON want the government to take immediate action on sexual harassment in the workplace. This campaign is supported by the TUC.

50% of women and $\frac{2}{3}$ of LGBT people have reportedly experienced sexual harassment at work. UNISON is running a survey and petition around sexual harassment in the workplace.

News

Harassment

The Equality and Human Rights Commission wants employers to be tougher on harassment in the workplace.

Guidance has been produced to assist employers in understanding their legal responsibilities and practical interventions.

Extract from the guidance:

“The evidence of the need for tougher action on harassment in the workplace is overwhelming. Harassment at work in all its different forms has a significant negative effect on both workers and employers. It damages the mental and physical health of individuals, which affects both their personal and working life, and has a negative impact on workplace culture and productivity.

Moreover, ineffective responses to harassment complaints compound the impact of the harassment on the individual.”



**Technical
Guidance**

Harassment

The guidance includes seven steps employers should consider to make sure they are taking all necessary action to not only deal with but prevent sexual harassment in the workplace as follows:

- Develop an effective harassment policy
- Engage staff with regular one to ones and have an open door policy
- Assess and mitigate risks in the workplace
- Consider using a reporting system that allows workers to raise issues anonymously or in name
- Train staff in what sexual harassment in the workplace looks like, what to do if workers experience it and how to handle complaints
- Act immediately when an harassment complaint is made
- Treat harassment by a third party just as seriously as that by a colleague.

Show Racism the Red Card - Schools

Show Racism the Red Card schools competition was launched at an event hosted by UNISON. The aim of these competitions is to encourage schools/other educational settings to produce creative work with an original anti-racism theme. To register go to info@theredcard.org



Conflict in the Workplace

Findings from a CIPD report revealed employers (20%) and employees (26%) agree conflict is prominent in their workplace. 20% agree 'people in my team sometimes reject others for being different', with 35% of employees saying they had experienced some form of interpersonal conflict over the past year, eg an isolated dispute or ongoing difficult relationship.

"If line managers are unable to manage conflict it can lead to poor work performance and even ill health. The 'quick fix' to this issue would be better training for line managers. We also are in need of managers who are emotionally intelligent; people who can ensure that a workplace doesn't become a playground for bullying." (Cary Cooper, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, University of Manchester)

Women Working Full Time

Record number of women are working full-time and fewer retiring.

According to the National Statistical Office (ONS), partly due to a rise in female employment rates and rapid increase in state pension age for women.

"In the three months to November 2019, 126,000 more women reportedly worked full time compared to the previous quarter. The number of women working full time is now at a record high of 9.26 million."

The Women's SOG AGM will take place on Tuesday, 3 March, 5.30pm to 7.30pm at Manchester Central Library, Meeting Room 1, Level 2.

The AGM will include election of officers and a report from the National Women's Conference. The Group's priority areas of work for 2020 will also be discussed at that time.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the Women's SOG or have any queries regarding the group's activities, please contact:

Marion Doherty, email m.doherty@manchester.gov.uk
or
Dawn Warriner, email d.warriner@manchester.gov.uk

Women's Pensions Campaign

The BackTo60 women's pension campaign is gaining pace, with UNISON being in support.

3.8 million women born in the 1950s are affected by a change in the pension age for women from 60 to 66. Many face a long wait, suffering hardship and health problems as a result.

"UNISON has over one million women members and quite a number have been affected by the raising of the pension age for women to 66 - having to work longer under difficult circumstances." Gloria Mills, UNISON's national equalities secretary

The outcome of a judicial review is awaited.

For further information on the BackTo60 campaign see the Manchester Branch website.

LGBT+

Following consultation by the National LGBT Committee, over 75% of respondents were in favour of a proposal to change the name of the group from LGBT to LGBT+. The + is more inclusive as some members do not use the LGBT label, or feel included. The + also aims to include the wide spectrum of groups and identities that make up the LGBT umbrella. This required a rule change.

A motion to conference: "Towards a more inclusive Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Self-organised group" was carried at the last national conference and asked that the National Executive Council:

- 1 Continue its work towards making UNISON's organisation, events, policies, systems and good practice advice inclusive of non-binary members;
 - 2 Continue to work with the National LGBT Committee, service groups and other UNISON structures as appropriate to make sure that UNISON's bargaining agendas and equality work fully reflect issues of concern to LGBT+ members.
-



Women's
SOG 2020
AGM

3 March

LGBT
change

UNISON
support
for
BackTo60
women's
pension
campaign

The Black Members SOG AGM will take place on 18 March 2020, at 12.30pm in Room 3007 Gaskell, Level 3, Town Hall Extension. Guest speaker: Keiran Barnes, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, People, Policy and Reform

In 2019 the group worked closely with the Branch and relevant workplace fora to assist in addressing and effecting positive change around:

- Black staff development and progression to senior roles
- Challenging racism in the workplace
- Promoting equality work of the Branch and Group
- Strengthening community links

Challenging racism in the workplace is part of UNISON's core work on race equality nationally. The union is working to identify key issues, including racism and discrimination in the workplace.

“Black members have the same concerns as any other member about jobs, fair pay and conditions of service, promotion and progression. But their experience of the workplace is too often also marked by racism and discrimination.”

Group contacts: Sonia Stewart email s.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk or Damian Daley email d.daley1@manchester.gov.uk

This year's conference will be held in Bournemouth and motions include:

- The effects of austerity on Black members (Manchester Branch)
- Mind the gap – Addressing racial disparities in the Public Sector
- Challenging racism and disability discrimination in the workplace: An intersectional approach
- The ethnicity pay gap
- Black women in leadership
- The treatment of Black women in maternity care

Health and Wellbeing

Programmes for health and wellbeing are lacking in some organisations and it's not thought that enough is being done to introduce them, as they're not considered to be of high priority.

The outcome of a health and wellbeing survey by Vested (workplaces, savings and benefits) showed that 36% of employers had nothing in place and 20% had started but needed further development. For those organisations with programmes in place, only 14% reviewed it every six months, with 47% carrying out an annual review. The most popular benefits offered included cycle to work schemes and employee assistance programmes.

Although 77% of employers recognised the importance of mental wellbeing, when asked about providing increased support for mental health, 51% of respondents



**Black
Members
SOG
AGM**

18 March

said yes, 26% said they would consider it and 23% said no.

More than half respondents had not bothered to survey staff to find out what assistance they needed.

“This indicates that, rather than finding out from the employees themselves what support they need for their physical and mental wellbeing, employers have historically gone straight to implementation with the hope that employees will like and use them,” (Howard Finch, Managing Director)

Many employers struggle to identify the key signs of stress until it is too late, and they fail to identify how significant a risk it is to the business. We find that line managers and supervisors are not sufficiently trained to assist in this area so it typically falls to the HR team, which may be undertrained or resourced to deal with these issues effectively.

Stress remains the number one reason for both short and longer-term employee absence and this is an area we recommend organisations focus on in 2020” (Wayne Campbell, Healthy Performance Managing Director)

New Regulation

A new regulation will come into force on 6 April this year.

The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations, known as Jack’s Law, will mean parents who suffer the loss of a child will be entitled to two weeks’ paid statutory leave. This could be taken as a single block of two

weeks, or two separate blocks of one week across the first year after the death.

“The UK will become the first country to have the right to two weeks off after the death of a child (under the age of 18), or after a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Parents employed for six months or more will be able to claim statutory pay for this period.”

Ingrid McGhee, partner and employment law specialist, Weightmans said:

“.....The UK is leading the way as the first country to offer two weeks’ leave and pay – it’s the longest period offered worldwide and may influence the approach taken by other countries going forward.

This is a positive step in clearly establishing that work and private life are becoming increasingly interlinked – the two must go hand in hand to support the other.

Employers should remember they are free to offer additional enhanced support, but we welcome the clarity that the regulations will provide on what they should be doing as an absolute minimum at such a distressing time.”

“.....All employers need to ensure they know about this important change in the law and what additional support they can offer to bereaved parents in their workplace, as this is vital time for them in their grieving process,” (Clea Harmer, chief executive at stillbirth and neonatal death charity Sands).

Jane Slater in the Community

Jane Slater, Deputy Branch Secretary, enjoyed a lovely Christmas lunch in December 2019, with residents, family and friends of the African Caribbean Care Group based at Claremont Resource Centre and their families.



Jane was invited as a local Trafford Councillor to speak about Equality and the good work the Centre does within the community.



Above: Posing with the founder Mrs Jones



Above: Jane with Mrs Jones and Centre manager, Dorothy

She was honoured to be asked to attend and thoroughly enjoyed the occasion, where she sampled a range of tasty Caribbean culinary delights and chatted with members of the community about the work of the care group and their long established outreach into the community.

Events

Events

January

27
Holocaust Memorial Day
Nationwide

31 January – 2 February
Black Members Conference
Bournemouth

February

1-28 February
LGBT History Month

3-7
National Apprenticeship Week

13-15
Women's Conference
Bournemouth

March

8
International Women's Day

14
Skills for Strength Organising
Convention, Manchester

April

6-8
Health Conference, Brighton

21
Advancing Social Mobility in the
Workplace

May

1-3
National Young Members'
Weekend, Glasgow

June

14-15
Local Government Conference
Brighton

16-19
National Delegates Conference
Brighton

July

10
Disability Awareness Day

August

Manchester Caribbean Carnival

Manchester Pride
August Bank Holiday Weekend

October

1-31
Black History Month

November

22 November - 22 December
Disability History Month

December

1
World Aids Day

EQUALITY MATTERS is also at
www.unisonmanchester.org
Deadline for comments and articles to
be submitted for Issue 15 of this
Newsletter is Friday, 20 March 2020.
Comments and articles to be emailed
to: s.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk