

# EQUALITY MATTERS



August 2021

Inequalities in various forms continue to present even more challenges and negative impacts on our everyday lives. If we are silent, we are giving consent for that to not only carry on, but to multiply. Now, more than ever, we must work together for meaningful and timely improvement. Unity is strength.

Your comments and articles are welcome.

Sonia Stewart  
Branch Equalities Officer

**Have your  
say on pay**



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**Make sure you are heard!**

**Have your  
say on pay**



**Special points  
of interest in  
this Issue:**

Disability  
Strategy

Stephen  
Lawrence Day  
Event

Maternity Care

Who Are You?

## News

### Disability Strategy

A national disability strategy was launched by the government in late July.

The purpose of this strategy, intended to benefit disabled people, is to bridge the gap in employment, education and skills.

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### Maternity Care

Birthrights, a charity championing respectful care during pregnancy and childbirth, is conducting a national inquiry around racial injustice in maternity care and individuals are being asked to share their experiences.

The service Birthrights provides includes advice and information on legal rights, as well as training doctors and midwives.

According to Birthrights, "Evidence repeatedly shows that Black, Asian and mixed ethnicity women and birthing people are more likely to die, experience baby loss, become seriously unwell and have worse experiences of care during pregnancy and childbirth, compared to white individuals."

The inquiry is investigating how systemic racism is impacting on maternity care, the harms being caused and what needs to change.

The survey closes on 31 August 2021. If you are interested in finding out more go to:

<https://www.birthrights.org.uk/campaigns-research/racial-injustice/>

## News

### Caring

As a way of encouraging retention, an LGA and ACAS webinar, has been set up to support carers in the workplace, in respect of their wellbeing and productivity.

There has been an impact on sickness absence, leaving work or stress for carers, many of whom find it difficult to balance caring responsibilities and work. 1 in 7 workers is a carer.

The webinar is government funded.

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### Pay Gap

#### Ethnicity and Gender

Despite 88% of organisations intending to report on ethnicity pay gap in 2022, 75% still don't have a formal framework in place to tackle diversity and inclusion. In addition, 32% of organisations don't report their gender pay gap.

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### Mental Health Support

#### Support

Since the pandemic 31% of HR managers now spend more time on providing mental health support to employees than they did prior to the pandemic.

The health of employees is at risk of long-term poor mental health due to overwork and their sleep patterns being damaged.

## Dementia

Dementia reportedly killed more women in 2020 than Covid-19.

Pressure is being put on health leaders to put more effort into treatments being developed and diagnosis being boosted.

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## What's your preference?

Working from home or office? Whichever you prefer, our working patterns have nonetheless changed.

As a result of pandemic restrictions, it has been found that around 46% of the working population worked from home during 2020 and 2021.

Furthermore, following the lifting of restrictions to work from the office on 19 July, many workers have still not been keen to return, with only 11.7% doing so. The choice to stay away has been helped by organisations working in a hybrid way, allowing the time to be divided between office and home working.

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## Inclusive or Exclusive?

The Equality Act defines harassment as 'unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for that individual.'

However, according to the CIPD, many organisations are not fostering inclusive workplaces and goes on to say "If the working culture does not support gender equality and women, or men, are afraid to speak up and challenge inappropriate behaviour, this could have serious implications for the business."

Research carried out in the NHS by Professor Richard Saundry of Sheffield University, in collaboration with other organisations, found that disciplinary and grievance cases increased and interpersonal issues which had been put to one side as more focus was placed on the pandemic, began to resurface.

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## Domestic Abuse

Employers are being encouraged to develop policies setting out how they approach cases of domestic abuse. Domestic violence and abuse can include:

- Using or threatening physical violence
- Going to the victim's home or workplace
- Intimidating, harassment or pestering; instructing or encouraging others do those acts on behalf of the abuser.

## Conflict Resolution

Conflict in the workplace reportedly costs £28.5bn per year to the economy. However, formal procedures, which include disciplinaries, dismissals and grievances, come at a cost of £12.8bn a year to organisations.

During the pandemic it was thought that conflict in the workplace was suppressed but had resurfaced, as reported in the previous issue of Equality Matters.

A study by the CIPD has found that between 2018-19, 9.7m employees experienced conflict. Although only 5% of employees actually left the organisation, 56% of complainants reported being impacted with anxiety, stress or depression.

Furthermore, not all employees choose to talk to their manager about workplace conflict. Although only 5% of employees seek resolution via workplace mediation, 74% of cases have been fully or mostly resolved.

Organisations are encouraged to place more emphasis, where there is conflict, on improving workplace relationships between individuals.

## Racism

Without the spotlight being on racism incidents against celebrities, almost 60% of Black workers believe initiatives around diversity and inclusion within workplaces would fizzle out, according to People Like Us networking group.

“Prioritising diversity and your diverse employees needs to be approached in a consistent way, not just when it is a trending topic on social media.”

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## Gender Pension Gap

By the time a woman is due to retire, the gender pension gap will have increased to as much as 56%, from 17% at the beginning of her career.

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## Pay Cut

Pret a Manger staff are reported to be preparing to go on strike as the pay cut they had in the pandemic, believed to be temporary at that time, is likely to be made permanent.

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## Make sure you are heard!



As you know, the 2021 National Black Members Live event was an online event due to pandemic restrictions.

All being well, it's hoped that the 2022 National Black Members Conference, scheduled for 21-23 January in Liverpool, will be a physical event.

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### UNISON INSPIRE Black Members Forum

Name Change: The SOG's name has been changed to:

UNISON Inspire  
Black Members' Forum

We have continued to meet (virtually) during the pandemic restrictions with the focus being on:

- Challenging inequalities in the workplace, particularly in relation to race
- Supporting and encouraging members
- Promoting Group activities
- Working closely with the Branch, other groups and sharing good practice
- Strengthening community links

Members were also involved in the planning and delivery of the Branch's Stephen Lawrence Day 2021 event (see page 6)

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The REACH Group, Chaired by Karen Green, a UNISON member, held an event on 5 August to give Children's Services staff an opportunity to see what community resources there are for Black, ethnic and minority young people.

It was a well-received event. They heard from community groups and the young people themselves and they were able to discuss the positive difference they make in the communities.

This will give you insights, ideas and key links for you to help support the young people that you work with every day. Sessions were delivered by:

#### **-Kysoclub - Kemoy Walker**

This youth work leader talked about the service he offers, about mentoring young people and offering a range of services.

#### **-84 Youth – Youth led organisation**

Based in Moss Side, who aim to reduce serious youth violence and address the perpetual trauma stress disorder experienced in communities with high visibility of violence. Akemia Minott and Jayvon.

#### **-IMPACT ZONE – Focusing on Africans and other ethnic groups.**

They run workshops for girls 12-15, do sessions with parents and work with religious groups. Featuring our very own Esther Olujobi

**-not Guilty by association** Joanne Feautodo - Focusing on Joint Enterprise

#### **-Equal Education Chances**

Support and services



The Stephen Lawrence campaign for justice, following Stephen's murder in 1993, was supported by UNISON nationally.

Members of UNISON Inspire Black Members Forum, supported by the Branch, organised a Stephen Lawrence Day 2021 event on 22 April.

Speakers for the day were:

Stuart Lawrence, Diversity, inclusion, grief youth engagement specialist and younger brother of Stephen Lawrence; Professor Gus John, Education and Human Rights Campaigner; Professor Geoff Thompson MBE, Youth Charter Founder and Chair; Rena Wood, Assistant Branch Secretary and North West Region Deputy Convenor; Minister Kemoy Walker, young member and community activist. Moving musical renditions were performed by Keneva O'Connor, local gospel artist.

The event was well attended, motivating and engaging with powerful presentations and positive feedback. Some examples of why people attended the event were:

"I believe unions must be central to the fight against racism today."

"Because I am black."

"I am mixed race and I am very angry about what is still happening in this day and age. I am fed-up of all the tokenistic gesture to just pass by things that are still happening. And that review for institutional racism was a joke.

"I work in Youth Justice and challenge disproportionately, racial stereotyping and racism I see."

"I am very anti any kind of prejudice and am very conscious that education and discussion are powerful tools in combating it. I have a young daughter, the more I know the better placed I am to support her and myself to understand the issues involved."

"I'm a mixed race woman and I have a vested interest in this discussion."

"Really important topic that needs to be addressed."

"To support anti-racism campaign."

"Speaker on racism in education."

"Interested in guest speakers views on the topic of whether systematic racism has moved on and interested as to know if there are ways forward!"

"I am really interested in the racism topic and my dissertation topic is about the differences and racism. I want to broaden my scope by joining this event. It would add me more information and I would be happy to learn new things to diminish racism."

Several event attendees were recipients of signed copies of Stuart Lawrence's book "Silence is Not an Option" launched in early April. The event is available to view on the Branch YouTube channel. Go to

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_T8\\_wPjg0VPuBYfXVyuvz2w](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_T8_wPjg0VPuBYfXVyuvz2w)

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## Kemoy Walker



### What is your day role?

I am a newly appointed Head of Year 7 in a catholic school in east Manchester and will commence that role in September 2021.

Prior to that I was Head of Year 9 and educator in North Manchester.

### What's your ideal job and why?

My aim is to be a headteacher. There aren't many Black headteachers.

In fact, only 2% of headteachers across the UK are Black.

### How long have you been a UNISON member?

I have been a UNISON member since 2012.

### What does UNISON mean to you?

UNISON means a lot and the opportunities so far have been great!

### Do you have a role within the union eg steward/convenor?

Not at the present time, but I would like to become more active.

### What are your interests away from work?

Away from work, I am a DJ and host, normally hosting events such as Carnival, Parklife and other community events.



This includes KYSO, a youth organisation that is in direct response to the growing number of young people who are either not already engaged in performing arts or projects.

The goal of the organisation is to identify and help young people who are going to have a turbulent transition to adulthood and offer a positive support system to avoid the pitfalls that can derail their lives.

The focus is slightly different at each level, but the goal remains the same – empower the young people to make positive changes in his/her life.

I also produce a monthly newsletter to keep people updated on events and opportunities I am involved in across the region.

**Who is your role model and why?**

My role model is Stephen Gabriel, the only Black headteacher in Manchester.

Stephen runs a secondary school in east Manchester, which is rated by Ofsted, aiming to be outstanding soon. He has shown that hard work and perseverance gets you far! I am proud of him.

**Note from the Editor****Good news!**

Kemoy has been recommended to the City Party for inclusion on the panel of candidates for the 2022 municipal elections.

Watch this space.

**Save the Date****September**

**13, 15, 16**

Age-Friendly Places in Practice online workshops

**17**

UNISON Network meeting for Black LGBT+ members

**17**

UNISON Network meeting for Disabled LGBT+ members

**20-21**

Virtual Special Health Conference

**October**

**5**

Stand Up To Racism Event  
St Peter's Square

**6**

Manchester Branch Black History Month Event  
Manchester Central Library

**12-13**

Virtual Retired Members Conference

**30 October-1 November**

National Disabled Members Conference, Liverpool

**November**

**19-21**

National LGBT+ Conference  
Brighton

**December**

**3-5**

National Young Members' Conference, Cardiff

**January 2022**

**21-23**

National Black Members Conference  
Liverpool (provisional)

**EQUALITY MATTERS is also at**

**[www.unisonmanchester.org](http://www.unisonmanchester.org)**

**Deadline for comments and articles to be submitted for the next Issue of this Newsletter is Monday, 13 September 2021.**

**Comments and articles to be emailed to:**

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