

# EQUALITY MATTERS

February 2022



Lots happening and lots for you to get involved in, especially the Branch AGM.

Your presence is valued and what you say matters, so we look forward to your participation in helping to move the work of the Branch forward for the benefit of all members.

Sonia Stewart  
Branch Equalities Officer

## Branch AGM

**29 March:**  
**12.30pm Friends**  
**Meeting House**

**29 March:**  
**5.30pm Virtual**

**30 March:**  
**12.30pm Virtual**

To register for a virtual event, please see page 8

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## NEWS

### Covid

**Long Covid:** Over the past 12 months, employees in 46% of UK organisations have experienced long Covid. They may, however, be missing out on accessing the help they need due to the nature of the condition still not being fully understood.

**Schools:** School staff shortages had increased by 3% between December 2021 and January 2022, due to schools having difficulty in finding temporary staff to cover lessons. 8.6% of teachers and school leaders were absent-4.9% of absences were due to Covid, in the first week back to school.

**Study:** A study claims that colds may give some Covid protection. "Natural defences against a common cold could offer some protection against Covid 19.." A study was carried out on 52 individuals who had lived with someone who just caught Covid and those who developed a "memory bank" of specific immune cells after a cold...."

**Working from Home:** Two thirds of white collar workers are reportedly expected to leave their jobs due to lack of face to face communication with colleagues/managers, due to working from home.

**Pupil's Remote Working:** Remote working is thought to have contributed negatively to students wanting to return to the classroom. An investigation and Ofsted report into low school attendance found that "....some pupils' perceptions of the need to be in school could be contributing to high absence rates."

### Health and Care Bill

The Bill has a key objective of increasing transparency and accountability, including local accountability to local communities and elected representatives in local councils.

Areas where amendments are under discussion include: Safeguarding children (eg issues around data sharing); young carers (eg appropriate measures taken when a patient is to be discharged from hospital into the care of a young carer—for the benefit of the young carer as well as the patient) and care worker pay (eg parity in pay between health and social care workforces).

**Long Covid not fully understood**

**School staff shortages**

**Covid and colds**

**Working from home affecting workers**

**Pupils' remote working linked to negative impact**

**Transparency and accountability are key**

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## NEWS

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### British Sign Language

The Bill on British Sign Language had its second reading in Parliament on 28 January 2022. Its first reading was in June 2021. The aim of the Bill is to "...promote and facilitate the use of British Sign Language by providing legal recognition, whilst preserving the architecture of the Equality Act 2010." See page 4 for more.

**Focus on British Sign Language**

### Down Syndrome Bill

The Down Syndrome Bill had its third reading in the House of Commons this month. A requirement is on the Government to publish guidance on the needs of people with Down Syndrome and how those needs can be met. The aim of the Bill is for improvement in the lives of people with Down Syndrome and the onus in delivery of requirements is on Authorities which provide health, care, education and housing services.

**Needs of people with Down Syndrome to be met**

### Disability Confident

Research: New research has found that the public sector in the UK is the most disability confident employer, with the most commitment to employment.

**Disability confident employers**

### Year of Disabled Workers

2022 is UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers with events, campaigns, training sessions and awareness raising. See UNISON national website 'Introducing the Year of Disabled Workers'. Branches are encouraged to get involved.

**2022 drive for disabled workers**

### Universal Credit

The number of people on universal credit is found to have risen by an additional 1.3 million, since the pandemic started and now stands at over two million. The TUC has called on the Government to do more to help low-paid workers.

**Rise in people on universal credit**

### Sexual and Domestic Abuse

A campaign has been launched to help victims and survivors of sexual and domestic abuse to seek help via the NHS. 24-hour centres offer confidential specialist, practical and medical support to "...anyone who has been raped, sexually assaulted or abused, no matter when it happened."

**Help for victims and survivors**

## British Sign Language

The Bill on British Sign Language had its second reading in Parliament on 28 January 2022. Its first reading was in June 2021. The Bill relates to England, Wales and Scotland.

### What's the aim?

- To declare British Sign Language an official language of the United Kingdom
- To provide for a British Sign Language Council to promote and advise on the use of British Sign Language
- To establish principles for the use of British Sign Language in public services
- To require public bodies to have regard to those principles and to guidance issued by the Council; and for connected purposes.

Clauses within the Bill include:

- Recognising British Sign Language as a language of Great Britain in its own right and
- A duty on the Secretary of State to issue guidance on the general promotion and facilitation of British Sign Language.

UK users of Deaf British Sign Language can face:

- Social exclusion as a direct result of linguistic exclusion, adversely affecting employment, education and access to healthcare.

Many have a lower reading comprehension age than the general population.

Approximately 150,000 people use British Sign Language in the UK.

### What's the next step?

The Bill is now at Committee Stage (Public Bill Committee) for scrutiny on 23 February.

**Bill is progressing through different stages**

**Principles in public services**

**Clauses include recognition of BSL as a language in its own right**

**Individuals can face social exclusion**

**Impact on reading**

**Committee scrutiny coming up**

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## LGBT+ History Month

February is LGBT+ History Month.

### Lace Up and Speak Up

Stonewall's 'Lace Up and Speak Up' Campaign is about wearing rainbow laces in support of LGBTQ+ inclusion, particularly in sport and fitness.

Why? LGBTQ+ people often feel unsafe and unwelcome in the sport and fitness environment.

The 'Lace Up and Speak Up' campaign encourages inclusion and people coming together, with a view to making sport and fitness a welcoming environment for everyone.

**Call for support of**

**'Lace Up and  
Speak Up'  
campaign**



### Wallchart

Also, check out the 'Voices and Visibility' uncovering hidden histories wallchart on UNISON's national site.

**Voices and  
Visibility Wallchart**





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## Menopause

The Women and Equalities Committee have been in discussion with various bodies, including trade union representatives, with a view to making workplaces more menopause friendly, the latest evidence session being held on 9 February 2022.

Areas under discussion include the human and economic impact on women leaving the workplace due to the menopause and what support employers can provide for women going through the menopause.

A survey conducted in 2019 (BUPA and the CIPD) found that 3 in 5 women were negatively affected at work. Also, there could be a link to leavers and underrepresentation at senior management levels, due to some women leaving employment early as a result of the menopause, and so missing out on career opportunities.

## To speak or not to speak

Women workers at Channel 4 were allegedly subject to non-disclosure agreements in relation to discrimination, victimization and equal pay cases.

It appears that the use of non-disclosure agreements are increasingly being used by employers as part of settlement agreements relating to alleged discrimination, harassment or bullying.

Clearly, this should not be happening and is another example of how women are discriminated against in the workplace and why this bad practice must be challenged, reported and eradicated.

Women shouldn't be afraid to:

- Go to work
- Speak up in the workplace or
- Put up with demeaning, unequal and/or unfair treatment.

**Ongoing discussions to bring about change**

**Human and economic impact**

**Women could be missing out on career opportunities**

**Women being silenced**



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## Black Members

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### UNISON National Black Members Conference 2022

**Update:** The National Black Members Conference scheduled for 21-23 January 2022 was postponed due to Covid restrictions and concerns from members. Following talks at national level, a virtual conference is expected to take place later in the year. Details to be confirmed.



## Challenge

Support each other

Celebrate achievements

Speak Up

Stay Strong

Be proud of who you are

Unity is Strength



### National Demonstration

### MARCH AGAINST RACISM

Saturday 19 March 2022 - UN Anti-Racism Day

LONDON: Assemble 12 Noon, BBC Portland Place W1A 1AA

• Black Lives Matter • Refugees & Migrants Welcome • Scrap the Nationalities & Borders Act • Stop the Policing Bill • No to Racism, Islamophobia, Antisemitism & Fascism • Defend GRT Rights • No to Institutional Racism

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## Save the Date

### February

LGBT+ History Month

**17-18**

National Women's Conference - Virtual

### March

**8**

Health and Safety Seminar  
London

**12**

Skills for Strength Convention  
Mechanics' Institute, Manchester

**19**

UN Anti Racism Day  
March Against Racism  
London

**29 and 30**

**Branch AGM. To register for a virtual meeting please go to:**

[unisonmanchester.eventbrite.co.uk](https://unisonmanchester.eventbrite.co.uk)

### June

**12-13**

Local Government Service Group Conference  
Brighton

**14-17**

National Delegate Conference  
Brighton

**EQUALITY MATTERS is also at [www.unisonmanchester.org](https://www.unisonmanchester.org)**

Deadline for comments and articles to be submitted for the next Issue of this Newsletter is Monday, 28 February 2022.

Comments and articles to be emailed to:

[sonia.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:sonia.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk)

**Send in your  
articles**

**Send in your  
comments**

**Send in your  
good news**

**Don't miss the  
deadline**