

Equalities Update

Welcome to the first edition of UNISON City of Edinburgh branch's monthly equalities newsletter. We expect to give an overview of equalities-related issues, information about upcoming dates to note and any opportunities within our branch for you to get more involved.

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed our lives in so many ways including how we socialise, work, shop and travel. Sharing special moments with our families and loved ones has changed. Creating new memories with friends now takes place mostly online. We've all had to adapt to these changes and there will be more to come as we move slowly towards a return to normal life. Thankfully we know these changes are temporary so it's important that we keep fighting for equality.

A little bit about me

I joined the City of Edinburgh Council in 2018 and work full time within Business Support. I'm very proud to have helped set up STRIDE, the Council's network for LGBT+ staff and supportive allies.

At our branch AGM in 2019 I became your equalities officer as I am committed to working towards true equality, both in the workplace and wider society. Through my role with UNISON, I regularly attend several meetings and forums within the council to raise and discuss equalities-related issues.

Over the last year or so, I've taken part in several UNISON training courses and met activists from across the country who are committed to ensuring our workplaces become safer and more equal.



LGBT+ members

June is known as Pride month within the LGBT+ community and marks the beginning of the annual Pride season both here in the UK and around the world. The situation this year means we've already seen the cancellation of most Scottish Pride events, including Edinburgh Pride which was scheduled to take place on Saturday 13th June. These events are so important as they often provide the only chance for some people to be their true selves.

I attended my first Pride march shortly after moving to Edinburgh in 2016. On the day, rainbow flags flew outside the Scottish Parliament, atop Edinburgh City Chambers, in various store fronts and from multiple windows throughout the route. It was incredible to see and I can still remember feeling safe and loved simply by being in the presence of thousands of others who understand that "Love Always Wins". Next year's Pride season will be one to remember as we re-unite to remember the past, celebrate the present and fight for the future of our community with twice as much energy! If you are interested in attending Edinburgh Pride as part of the UNISON block, please get in touch with the branch or myself directly.

Black members

There's no denying that reading about the inequality in death rates amongst our black members due to Covid-19 was both shocking and horrifying. We all know that our black members face discrimination in the

workplace and wider society but seeing the figures drove the message home. UNISON are in the process of creating a campaign around the inequality faced by black members with regards to Covid-19 so I'll share more information about this in the future. The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) has written to Nicola Sturgeon asking for data regarding Covid-19 to be broken down by race. It's currently possible to filter the information by sex, age, local authority or NHS Health Board.

Disabled members

UNISON's disabled members have recently produced quick guides to Reasonable Adjustments, Social Model and Disability Language. These handy resources are available to download from the UNISON UK website. The Reasonable Adjustments Guide will be particularly useful where members are expected to work from home without access to any adjustments in place within their usual working environment.

Women members

Across various sectors women tend to be on the frontline in essential roles such as social care workers, nurses, cleaners and teachers. UNISON knows that our women members are amongst those hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic so we need to ensure that their experiences are shared and their concerns heard. Our branch are expecting to appoint Jacqui Bain to the role of women's officer in the next couple of weeks. Jacqui is an active steward within Children & Families and was involved in the project to bring free sanitary products to Council community centres. I met with her just before lockdown and I know know she's going to bring a great deal of energy and passion to the role.

FAQ

What is the Equality Act?

The Equality Act (EA) came into effect 1st October 2010 and merged several pieces of legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act, Race Relations Act and Sex Discrimination Act.

Who does it cover?

Everyone. We can all face discrimination by employers or service providers. People are covered by the EA if they (a) have a protected characteristic (b) are perceived to have a protected characteristic or (c) are associated with someone who has (or is perceived to have) a protected characteristic.

For example, if person (a) thinks that person (b) is gay (or a muslim or pregnant) and treats them less favourably, the law has still been broken whether or not person (b) is gay or a muslim or pregnant.

What is a protected characteristic?

The EA prescribes 9 protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage & civil partnership; pregnancy & maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. People can face discrimination due to having or being perceived to have more than one protected characteristic

Upcoming dates to note in June

- June - Pride month
- June 1st - Global day of parents
- June 8th - 14th - Carers week
- June 10th & 17th - Menopause Workshop
- June 19th - International Day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict
- June 20th - World refugee day



Michael Richardson,
He/Him Equalities Officer

Roles available

Our branch is currently looking for members interested in taking on the following UNISON roles:

- Young members' officer
- Black members' officer
- LGBT+ members' officer
- Disabled members' officer

The main task for these roles is to let the branch know of issues, within and out-with the workplace, affecting members who belong to that group. Branch officers will take action by raising at the most appropriate forum, communicating to our members or linking up with other UNISON activists across the country. It's expected that you will contribute to the monthly branch committee meeting along with providing an update for the equalities newsletter.

If you are interested in becoming a UNISON equalities representative, please contact me on equalities@unison-edinburgh.org.uk or 07565 898 554