

Equalities Update



Welcome to the UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch August Equalities Newsletter. Over the last few weeks we've seen further relaxations by the Scottish Government around Covid-19. Restaurants, bars, cafes and shops are starting to re-open with a range of measures in place to protect customers and staff.

I met up with a friend recently for a coffee and that took quite a lot of planning as many places operate booking systems or takeaway only. The staff, wearing PPE, took our temperature on arrival, pointed out the one-way system and explained how and what we could order. We need to remember that whilst a version of normality starts to return for some of us, it's not the case for everyone. There are people still shielding or at high risk who cannot meet up with friends for a coffee or meal.

Inequality exists in most aspects of society so UNISON will continue fighting for the marginalized, those who face discrimination and those who are under-represented. If you want to get involved in the fight for equality, our branch is looking for equality representatives so please get in touch.



Recently I met up with Rakiya Suleiman, Site Lead for UNISON Lothian Health Branch, Chair of UNISON Scotland National Black Members' Committee & vice-chair of UNISON National Black Members' Committee. Rakiya is an Equality & Diversity Adviser within NHS Lothian and has been a trade union activist since she was 17. We discussed a range of topics including Black Lives Matter, the (lack of) diversity within our institutions and the health inequalities faced by our Black members during Covid-19. We talked about UNISON Scotland's recently published report "Underlying Inequalities & Infection Risk: Black Workers & Covid-19". The report found that silenced voices and poor communication of safety measures impact everyone, with a disproportionate impact on Black workers.

I'm also pleased to announce that we've received a nomination for someone interested in becoming our Black Members' Officer. It's expected that this will be confirmed during our August Branch Committee so I'll provide an update next month. This appointment forms part of our branch's ongoing response to the Black Lives Matter human rights movement

Join us in UNISON 0131 558 7488 or www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk



UNISON recently submitted a response, on behalf of Disabled members, to the Women & Equalities Select Committee within the UK Parliament. The submission was made in response to a follow-up inquiry looking at the impact of Covid-19 on people with disabilities. UNISON's response highlighted the gaps in Government guidance which leaves many disabled workers at risk.

UNISON is calling for:

- Increase in Statutory Sick Pay and extension to more low paid workers
- New right to home working for disabled workers who choose it
- A significant investment in Access to Work (A publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work)
- Clear Government advice that shielding workers should continue to work from home from 1 August if it is possible to do so
- Extension of the furlough scheme for disabled people where it has not been reasonably possible to facilitate home working or redeployment.

Our branch is keen to ensure the voices of our disabled members are heard so we are currently looking for someone to take on the role of Disabled Members' Officer. If you are interested, please get in touch with the branch.



Many of you will have read about the awful anti-LGBT rhetoric brought to light during the presidential election in Poland. I wrote to Edinburgh Councillors last week regarding the official partnership agreement with Krakow and am pleased to see that this will be **reviewed**. Updates will follow.

I was excited to learn that a new LGBT+ centred café will be opening in Bruntsfield. Oskar and Zachariah have taken over management of the Greenwood café. They will run it as a sober and safe space for the LGBT+ community and supportive allies. **Their GoFundMe page** has surpassed the £5,000 goal which will enable the café to buy a video projector and additional items so they can host exhibitions after it opens in September. Well done to them!

After the pride flag was removed from Villanueva de Algaidas' town hall **500 Pride flags filled the Spanish town.**

On International Non-Binary People's Day (July 14th) a **Private Members' Bill** was introduced in the UK Parliament calling for the "X" gender option to be available on UK passports.

I encourage UNISON members to sign the **Scottish Parliamentary petition** calling for a ban on LGBT+ conversion therapy which is horrific and has no place in a progressive Scotland.



I've previously talked about my commitment to ensuring that our branch appoints a Women's Officer as soon as practically possible. I was pleased to learn recently that Branch Committee meetings will be held virtually with the first one scheduled for August 5th. This means our branch can start to discuss and vote on nominations received for Branch Officer roles. Jacqui Bain has been nominated for Women's Officer and we expect this to be confirmed next week. I know Jacqui is keen to introduce herself so she will either provide an introduction in next month's newsletter or she may write out directly to branch members.

Officer Roles available in our branch

- Disabled Members Officer
- LGBT+ Members' Officer
- Young members' officer

We are also looking for people interested in becoming Equality



Support for Council colleagues

PAM Assist can be contacted 24/7 on 0800 882 4102 or via their website www.pamassist.co.uk

(Username: CEC Password: CEC1)

Chaplaincy support is provided by Hilda Warwick who worked as an NHS mental health nurse on an adult acute psychiatric ward.

Support for everyone

SAMH provides an **information service** and can have a chat about mental health on 0344 800 0550 Monday-Friday, 9-6.

Support in Mind Scotland offer an online chat service Monday-Friday, 9am – 5pm

Breathing Space advisors come from a range of backgrounds including mental health, counselling and social work. They can be contacted on 0800 83 85 87:

- Mon – Thurs, 6pm through until 2am
- Friday 6pm through to Monday 6am

Samaritans can be contacted 24/7 on 116 123 and operate an email service

Dates to note in August

- August 9th – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- August 12th – International Youth Day
- August 19th – World Humanitarian Day
- August 23rd – UNESCO International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its abolition