

UNISON – taking us seriously

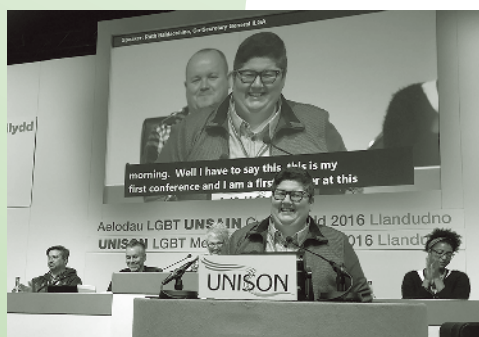
As we prepare for LGBT conference, it's worth asking why so many LGBT members – more than ever before – give up their weekends to attend a union meeting? And why does UNISON put so many resources into self-organisation?

Conference presents a rare chance to be in the majority, among people who get you. This is the power of pride events too. Walking down streets in celebration of our lives, protected by our numbers from hostility or abuse.

Conference is a place to talk through our issues, developing our thinking. To test our assumptions and make sure we are relevant and inclusive. To agree our priorities and discuss how to take UNISON's priorities into the LGBT community and LGBT priorities into all parts of UNISON.

UNISON puts in the resources because it takes LGBT equality seriously. This matters a lot.

Our annual equality survey shows some noticeable differences between LGBT members and non-LGBT members. One difference is the reason why we don't report discrimination. The main reason LGBT members don't report is that we don't think we will be taken seriously. The second most common reason is that we don't think the issue will be taken seriously. There is more on the survey on page 5.



This strikes a chord. It's the pernicious nature of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. It taps into long-held fears about our identity not being valid.

There is an interesting insight into this in a research paper with the engaging title 'People like me don't belong here' (you'll find it if you search online). Published this summer by University of Exeter researchers, it looks at the impact of 'stigmatised' characteristics.

They found that concealing characteristics such as being LGBT results in lower self-esteem, job satisfaction and commitment at work. It impacts not just on the individual but on the organisation they work for. The researchers don't suggest everyone must be open in all contexts. Their point is about the benefits of inclusive workplaces where people don't need to hide. The same applies to our union.

As a community, our visibility is vital. It impacts on every aspect of our lives.

Our visibility reveals our contribution to public services, our experiences and our needs. This is why UNISON very much welcomes the launch of sexual orientation monitoring for service users in health and social care in England. We have been part of its development and are involved in its implementation. There is information on the NHS England and LGBT Foundation websites. Trans status monitoring is next, but much current trans monitoring is problematic and further discussions are needed.

Our conference is fun. We attend because we enjoy it. But it is so much more as well. It shows that UNISON takes us and our equality seriously.

OUR LGBT PUBLIC SERVICE CHAMPIONS

UNISON's public service champions campaign celebrates the vital jobs UNISON members do and the difference they make to people's lives. It supports our call for proper investment in public services.



Sophie Robinson, mental health nurse, Northumberland

I've been a qualified mental health nurse for almost 23 years and seen many changes. Most have been positive, especially with regards to the ethos of care we provide. But austerity has massively impacted on our ability to provide the level of care we wish to give to our local community.

I work in a mental health crisis team, in the most northerly county in England. Our catchment area is almost 2,000 square miles and predominantly rural. We can spend hours driving from one location to another. But we do all we can to get to our service users as quickly as possible. Our service also provides telephone support 24 hours a day, every single day of the year.

We are working collaboratively to improve mental health support provided to the LGBT community in the north east. My Trust has been very supportive of my role promoting LGBT rights as UNISON's branch LGBT officer. I am openly trans and bi and proud to be chair of the Trust's LGBT+ network, working in partnership.

Despite the challenges we face, I am proud to say that I work in a highly motivated, dedicated and professional team.



Jade-Su Armstrong, community employment specialist, Nottingham

My job is to support disabled people and those with a long-term health condition into employment, training or volunteering. This includes weekly jobs clubs and making sure employers know their legal obligations with regard to reasonable adjustments. Every person I work with is referred through the job centre.

I enjoy talking to a variety of people and supporting them where others have failed. Simply getting people out of the house more is a good start: some of the people I am working with have never worked, or haven't for a long time. They are very socially isolated.

The job centre often uses a one-size-fits-all approach, which doesn't allow for people's health conditions or disability. It's no wonder most of the people are at their wits' end by the time they come to me. My work makes a real difference.



Kaz Williams, lead on child sex exploitation and domestic abuse, Somerset

I work with vulnerable young people aged around 13–19 years, a lot of it face to face. I get referrals from the children and adolescents mental health service and work closely with social workers. My job involves casework, training, supporting other staff, targeted youth support and sex and relationship education.

I love working with young people. It's especially interesting working with adolescents going through the transition into adulthood. You have to build their trust, particularly given what they've already been through. Public sector funding cuts mean more work and less time for us – we are always under pressure.

Gender recognition – time for change

UNISON warmly welcomed the finding of the 2016 Women and Equalities Committee trans equality inquiry that laws on gender recognition and protecting trans people were outdated, over-medicalised, confusing and inadequate. We have been pushing for progress on its recommendations. This includes the recommendation that legal gender recognition be based on self-declaration, as in Argentina, Malta, Ireland and other places. Currently in the UK, it depends on a panel of 'experts' agreeing a 'diagnosis' of gender dysphoria. When the government finally announced it would be consulting on changes to the Gender Recognition Act this autumn, all hell broke loose.

You can barely switch on the radio or TV, let alone go on social media, without the next dose of scaremongering. We are told this is ridiculous/PC gone mad/the end of civilisation as we know it/dangerous to innocent children/threatens women's safety... the list goes on. This doesn't surprise us as transphobia is

often very close to the surface. There are individual and organised campaigns against gender self-declaration. Sadly, this includes an organised campaign from within parts of the Labour movement. Model motions are circulating for constituency Labour Party meetings, with the suggestion that these can be easily adapted for union branch meetings.

To the casual observer, they may appear quite innocuous. They talk about the importance of women-only spaces, something we value greatly, too. What's insidious is the juxtaposing of women's safety with trans rights, as though trans people are a threat to women's safety. What's beneath it is a denial of the right of trans people to be themselves. A denial that they exist.

So if these motions crop up on your CLP or union branch agendas, explain what they really mean and vote them down.



Securing Black LGBT perspectives and participation

By Davis Mac-Iyalla, Ealing local government UNISON

A few years ago, I was suffering discrimination at work because I was an out and Black gay person. I needed help and support so I turned to UNISON.

I chose UNISON because I saw that they were actively involved in pride marches and at International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) conferences. I knew that this was the place to get support as an LGBT person. From the start, it was easy for me to get help. I felt I was not alone. I found many role models, actively working to support the inclusion and affirmation of LGBT people. But specific Black LGBT role models were very scarce, especially at the local branch level.

I feel it is very important to have visible LGBT Black role models in the union because many Black LGBT members are still hiding, most likely from faith-based discrimination or fear of persecution. They need to feel that they can get support; that they are not alone; that there are others out there going through the same problems they may be suffering with.

There is a confidential policy in UNISON that allows members to freely discuss issues that are important to them without fear of having it publicised. There is so much benefit from members finding help from people that understand where they are coming from and who have an understanding of their religion or culture.

I have wondered if there might be barriers preventing more Black LGBT participation in UNISON. However, I can personally say that I have not identified any direct barriers. I feel it is probably members' own feelings and concerns on how they will be perceived as a Black LGBT person outside of the union that prevents participation. I think more visible Black LGBT role models and more Black LGBT-focused activities will help to overcome this and reaffirm the message that they are not alone.

A good starting point is to question members, to find out what they feel is needed, what they feel are the problems and to get an idea of their experience on a daily basis at their workplace.



UNISON was able to help me through a very difficult time. We know there must be other Black LGBT members who also need support and positive role models. We must all work to make sure they get the support and help they need.

Davis is a member of the national LGBT committee and one of the LGBT committee's representatives on UNISON national Black members committee. This article appeared first in UNISON Black members' newsletter Black Action.

2017 UNISON equality survey – what you said

Our second annual UNISON equality survey revealed a host of interesting – and some alarming – findings. A third of UNISON members had experienced or witnessed unfair treatment at work in the past year.

- 31% said their employer did not keep them informed about its equality policies.
- 41% had received no employer-organised equality training.
- 43% described their standard of living as worse than a year ago.
- 26% were more in debt.

The purpose of the survey is to give us a snapshot of members' experiences around equality and to allow us to track changes over time. The 2017 survey ran over the summer months and gained nearly 12,000 online responses – well over twice the number of the first survey in 2016.

Around 20% of responses were from activists. We welcome the number of responses from those who are not (yet) activists. It shows they have an interest in UNISON's work for equality and it also shows our communications are reaching



them. 40% said pressure of work was the main barrier to getting more involved.

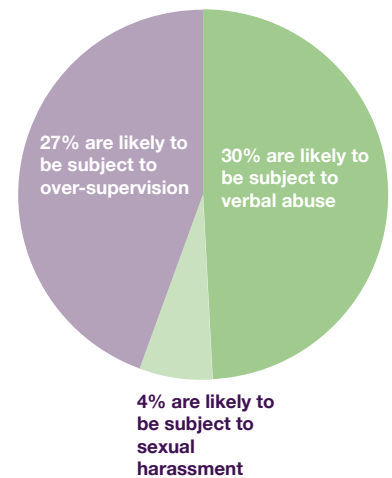
You can see a full summary of the results at unison.org.uk/equality.

What did LGBT members say?

We looked at the responses specifically from LGBT members to see how they compared. LGBT members represent 6% of all survey participants. In many ways, the experiences of LGBT members are the same as non-LGBT members. For example, we are spread across the pay bands in the same way, meaning we earn the same. The same number of us are worse off than we were a year ago.

We are equally likely to have experienced or witnessed discrimination. This discrimination is linked to the full range of protected characteristics – LGBT people are just as likely to experience, racism, sexism, ageism and anti-disability discrimination as non-LGBT people. Needless to say, we are more likely to experience homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. We are also much more likely to experience discrimination based on marriage or civil partnership.

So what were the differences? The LGBT cohort is significantly younger and therefore more recently recruited to UNISON. We are more than twice as likely to work in the voluntary sector and slightly more likely to work in private sector, but less likely to work in local government. We are more likely to



hold an official UNISON position at branch, regional and national level. 35% of us want to get more involved in UNISON, compared to 22% of the whole sample. However we have greater problems with time off for union activities and we are more likely to cite lack of confidence as a barrier to our greater involvement.

When it comes to particular types of unfair treatment, we are more likely to be subject to verbal abuse (30% compared with 22%), sexual harassment (4% compared with 2%) and over-supervision (27% compared with 22%).

We are just as likely to report or not report discrimination as non-LGBT people. But the main reasons we don't report it are different. For LGBT members, the main reason was that we did not think we would be taken seriously (45% for LGBT members compared with 29% for all members). Next most common was that we did not think the issue would be taken seriously (41% compared with 33%).

Food for thought indeed.

LGBT members standing for public office

We want to change the world. To do that, we need to get involved. We do this in different ways – there is no one right way! But being involved in UNISON has encouraged many members to stand for public office, something they would never have considered before. Here some of them talk about their experiences.



Sam Feeney – county council candidate

I'm a young people's counselling and mental health worker. I've been a UNISON member since the mid-'90s. Our constituency has always been strongly Tory with a very low turnout. After Jeremy [Corbyn] became leader, Labour Party membership grew enormously, even in market towns like mine. In our February 2016 branch meeting, we talked about putting up a fighting candidate for the 2017 county council elections – who would be up for it?

I'd grown up in the town and was aware of the changing demographic. Through my work with young people, I was very aware of hidden poverty. I can talk to anyone at the drop of a hat because of my work. My offer was snapped up at the meeting.

What motivated me was seeing the same issues day in and day out. In my work role, I am limited in what

I can say. I wanted to be able to speak up on behalf of those who don't have a voice. And to speak up about my own issues. Third sector workers are not valued and our wages have stagnated.

For the first time, we got Labour leaflets into every house in our ward and did lots of town centre campaigning. I came third but was only 13 votes from coming second. It put us on the map. Labour never came anywhere when I was growing up.

Then in the snap election the following month, we took 5,000 votes off the sitting Tory MP's majority. We'd have done even better if all the social care stuff had broken before the postal vote deadline.

We're standing candidates in the 2018 district council elections with much more confidence and optimism. There's no such thing as a safe seat anymore!

I was nervous about whether me being trans and queer was going to be an issue. Actually it wasn't at all. I knew I had the support of LGBT Labour and my local party. They had my back. I didn't know at the time, but I was the first out trans man to stand for Labour in the country.

Many people are so isolated – and that's really hard, particularly

now with the vicious and virulent backlash we're seeing over the proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act.

If you're passionate about what you believe in, now is the time to get involved. You can make a huge difference.

Deirdre Costigan – local council candidate



As a policy officer, I've worked with councillors for years, always as a 'backroom girl'. Like many women, having the confidence to put yourself forward was an issue for me. But I realised there are a lot of men in politics who really aren't that good at it!

Being a local councillor is all about trying to fix the little things in life that can have a huge impact on people's lives. Sorting out the fly tipping, expanding the local school or persuading TfL to run a bus to an isolated estate, you can immediately

see the impact. That's what I want to do.

I first dipped my toe in by becoming a school governor. This got me more involved in the local area and gave me new skills and confidence. Having been a Labour Party member for years, I'd put in the ground work of knocking on doors, stuffing envelopes and doing leaflet rounds.

Becoming a candidate was a three-stage process. First I applied to be on the panel of candidates for the local election and was interviewed by three experienced activists. They recommended I be added to the panel.

I applied to the ward next to where I live. First, members whittled interested candidates down to a shortlist of six. I then had a week to knock on members' doors and bombard them with letters and leaflets to get them to back me. Then at the selection meeting I had to give a presentation and answer questions. The questions weren't that difficult but my mind went blank a few times from pure nervousness. There was a secret ballot and I was selected.

Since then, we've been canvassing every weekend and taken loads of photos in front of local landmarks for leaflets. It's been strange to have to ask people to vote for me. But I'm excited about hopefully being elected as a Labour councillor next May and making a difference for local people.

It's not something to go into without thinking about how it will impact on your life. But it's really rewarding. For women in particular, remember you are much more capable than you think.

David Calderwood – tribunal member

I decided to apply to be an employment tribunal member after taking a tribunal case myself. Our employer tried to take holidays off us and we took it to tribunal and won. Seeing how it all worked, I thought 'I fancy doing that'.



Opportunities don't come up very often, so when I saw it advertised I applied straight away. Positions used to be by nomination but now it's by open competition.

There is an aptitude test and an interview. I'm sure it's because I've been a UNISON steward for so long that they wanted me; my union experience was seen to be highly relevant.

Training was provided and I took up my position. To start with, I was sitting about once a month. Then when tribunal fees were introduced, numbers of tribunals fell through the floor. It was more like once a year that I was called to be on a panel. That's why UNISON's challenge to the fees was so important. UNISON's Supreme Court victory – the ruling that the government's introduction of fees was unlawful discrimination – is brilliant.

In the meantime, though, while there were very few employment tribunals, I was recruited to be a panel member for social security appeal tribunals. These panels

consider appeals in relation to disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance for Children. I am one of the disability qualified members and sit on the appeals with a lawyer and a doctor. It's my 30 years' experience as a social worker that they were interested in for this. Now that workers can take cases to tribunal without the barrier of fees, we expect the number of employment cases to pick up again.

I'd encourage activists to consider applying to be a tribunal member. You need to be a steward and be involved but if you are, people will want your experience. It's not as daunting as you think.



Katrina Gilman – Westminster parliamentary candidate

I've always been political. I've always voted Labour. I've always had an opinion. But I'd never considered standing for office till I got involved in self-organisation. I wouldn't have had the confidence before. UNISON gave me the skills and the self-belief.

Through the LGBT group I got active in the rest of the union. The LGBT group nominated me for the Trade Union Labour Organisation (TULO) political school for potential candidates.

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LGBT safe housing scheme



UNISON activist Martin McConnellogue manages a residential project in Northern Ireland that supports 25 young people aged 16–21. These young people have been on the streets and are very marginalised. They end up homeless for a hundred and one different reasons. A number of them are LGBT.

Earlier this year, Martin was selected for a programme organised by Boston College to Massachusetts and South Carolina to view LGBT community work in these states. One initiative was a homelessness project at Harvard University. It was an eight-bed unit for young LGBT people up to 25 years of age.

He was very impressed with this safe space for young LGBT people, where staff were all trained in appropriate language and work closely with LGBT services around the Boston area.

When Martin returned home he discussed the idea with colleagues and saw the potential for replicating the services in Northern Ireland. He met with the Council for the Homeless as well as senior

managers in First Housing Aid and Support Services (FHASS) and local LGBT organisations to develop a local model. The FHASS LGBT Safe Housing Scheme was launched in September. This included protocols for staff and a visible window sticker indicating that this is a safe space for LGBT people. A training programme for staff to ensure that they are skilled to deal with LGBT issues and can signpost other services has been developed and is currently being rolled out.



You read it here – but what happened next?

The last issue of Out in UNISON included news about plans for the Isle of Wight's first ever Pride, which took place on Ryde beach in July. UNISON was involved from the start and was a rainbow sponsor. Preparations took a few twists and turns, involving two resignations – from a homophobic columnist on the Island's newspaper and the long-term sitting Tory MP, who stepped down shortly before the snap election after his homophobia was publicly challenged by a sixth form student. Well, on the day, the sun shone and the UNISON flags fluttered gaily in the gently breeze.

Fast forward a few months, and Isle of Wight Pride has been named UK Pride 2018, winning out against some fierce competition. Book your place on the ferry for 21 July 2018!

More island news...

Staying with island news, in 2016 Out in UNISON reported on the successful campaign for same-sex marriage in the Isle of Man, led by UNISON activist Sam Hudson. Marriage was just the start. Earlier this year, Sam liaised with local politicians to explain the need for changes to the proposed Equality Bill. As a result of his interventions, the Manx legislation now replaces the term 'transsexual' with 'transgender' and three loopholes that potentially allowed businesses to unfairly discriminate against transgender people in employment and access to accommodation have been removed. These are changes that are yet to be implemented in the UK. The Isle of Man Equality

Act received Royal Assent in July and will be implemented in stages. Sam has recently been in discussion with politicians about changes to the currently outdated sex laws and will be submitting a consultation response regarding compulsory PHSE education in schools.



Standing up against bullying



UNISON activist Natalie Roberts has recently taken up the role of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying co-ordinator for Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC). SRtRC is an educational charity that was initially founded to tackle racism in society. Over the past 20 years, it has used the high-profile status of football and football players to help publicise its message. SRtRC is dedicated to challenging and tackling all forms of discrimination and continues to develop resources and training programmes to complete this important work.

About 10 years ago, SRtRC was commissioned to produce an education pack for schools: 'Homophobia: let's tackle it'. UNISON was involved in the drafting and promotion of the pack. Although it was distributed widely, there wasn't the funding

to attach a training programme to it. Then, last year, the Department for Education and the Government Equalities Office funded a pilot on tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. Twenty events were held at football stadiums, across all four football leagues. These sessions consisted of education workshops and panel Q and As. There were 33 current professional players from the men's and women's games on the panels. The sessions were also supported by ex-professionals and coaches and experts from the LGBT community. They engaged with 1,450 young people. There were also four teacher training conferences attended by close to 200 teachers and 600 schools were sent the 'Homophobia: let's tackle it' education pack. Again, these sessions were very well received but further funding was not available to take the work forward.

As a charitable organisation SRtRC's projects all need funding, some of it coming from local authorities and from the trade union movement. Indeed, UNISON was one of the organisation's original funders. SRtRC decided to invest the money itself and recruited Natalie to develop the work. Natalie has a background in teaching and education and she's already running workshops in schools, workplaces



and at UNISON branch meetings. The sessions are currently being charged for at full cost while long-term funding is sought. The aim of the project is to make sure people understand what homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying is and know how to tackle it, report it and how to stop it escalating into hate crime. Natalie's work links very closely to SRtRC's hate crime project.

To find out more contact Natalie on 0191 2576200 or natalie@theredcard.org

UNISON is developing its work on tackling hate crime, raising it as a workplace issue. The aim is to raise awareness, encourage reporting, support affected members and negotiate workplace policies.

New guidance: sets out the law; explains hate crimes and hate incidents and the importance of tackling both; explains the role of UNISON reps and how to negotiate zero tolerance policies and support for all those affected; and includes a model workplace policy.

A course for activists to accompany the guidance was piloted during national hate crime awareness week this October and will be rolled out to regions in 2018.

The guidance is online at unison.org.uk/equality.



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Standing for public office

There's been a welcome increase in the representation of gay men in the Westminster parliament. The same isn't true for women or trans people. We've been quite invisible for decades.

TULO pointed out that the skills I'd learnt as a union activist were exactly the ones Labour looks for in the selection process: representing members, standing up for people, campaigning.

I got selected to stand for The Wrekin in an open shortlist and ran in the 2015 general election. The sitting Tory MP had a comfortable majority. In an election where Labour's vote went down nationally, I maintained it in The Wrekin. We also kept the local authority Labour, which was our main priority.

Now I'm on the precipice of another selection – to stand in the next general election. If selected, I know I've got Labour party members, my trade union and LGBT Labour standing with me. We don't let our members stand on their own!

My advice to anyone thinking about it? Make sure you are involved in Labour Link. Use your UNISON friends and allies for advice and support. Lots of people have experiences to share and will want to help you.

Out in UNISON

Pass notes

Subject: the pink pound

I know about the new pound coin but what's the pink pound?

You must be a young person. The pink pound was quite a thing in the 1990s.

Tell me more...

Big business noticed homosexuality was no longer a crime. They realised some customers must be gay. They had an idea that gay people had lots of disposable income. So they started targeting them and their so-called pink pounds with advertising campaigns and specific products.

Really, what sort of thing?

Holiday destinations, music genres, clothing, lots of stuff. Identity shopping. There's still some of it about. Have you seen those women kiss in the Special K advert?

So was it true that gay people were better off?

There was very little evidence. Virtually no-one monitored sexual orientation. Anyone who's always worked full time and doesn't have dependents will be better off. Some of them would be gay. Trans people were barely on the radar at all.

But LGBT people have always had children and other dependents. We come from all parts of society and all walks of life, don't we?

Exactly.

So do we have any evidence now?

We're getting there. The LGBT slice of our 2017 UNISON equality survey, for example. LGBT members' pay bands followed the same spread as for the whole sample.

You what?

In our survey, being LGBT seemed to have no measurable effect on your

pay packet. The same is probably not true for trans people, particularly if you take into account trans people who can't even get decent work. We suspect trans people are much worse off.

Any other interesting findings?

Compared to everyone who responded to the survey, the same proportion of LGBT members said they were worse off than a year ago. Many reported going without a daily meal, keeping the house warm, an annual holiday or a night out.

How can UNISON help with this lack of pink pounds?

Most important is our campaign for real pay rises for all public service workers: Pay Up Now!

But UNISON also helps members who are struggling, through our welfare charity There For You and by signposting organisations like the Money Advice Service, which helps people make the most of the money they do have.

Don't say:

I'm alright Jack/Jackie/Jaq/Jax

Do say:

Sign me up to the Pay Up Now! Campaign unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/pay-up-now



Building LGBTI activism in South Africa

Those of you at our 2014 LGBT conference will well remember the inspirational speech from Virginia Magwaza. Virginia was co-ordinator of a project to build LGBTI activism in South Africa's public service unions. This was the first LGBT project to be funded by UNISON's international development fund. The project has now finished and we celebrate its achievements. It included workshops in North West, Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal provinces and promotion of the project at Pride events in Soweto, Ekurhuleni and Vaal.

A trade union dialogue took place which cemented links between the LGBTI activists and gender co-ordinators from four public service unions and COSATU (South African TUC). The project developed four provincial committees and over 50 LGBTI activists with public service unions in South Africa, providing a strong platform for future work.



Calendar of events 2018

06 – 08 July - Sparkle

07 July – London Pride

08 July UK Black Pride

19 July – UNISON national trans network meeting

19 July – UNISON national bi network meeting

21 July – UK Pride – Isle of Wight

02 – 05 August – BiCon

13 September – UNISON national disabled LGBT members network meeting

14 September – UNISON national Black LGBT members network meeting

23 September – Bi Visibility day

16 – 18 November – UNISON LGBT conference

20 November – Transgender day of remembrance

Contact us

To find out about UNISON's work for LGBT equality and download our wide range of resources, visit unison.org.uk/out.

Email out@unison.co.uk with queries.

Trouble at work? Contact your UNISON rep.

For more information about your regional LGBT group or to join UNISON please call **0800 0 857 857**.
Minicom **0800 0 967 968**.



Public services need a pay rise

The tide may be turning on your pay. The government is now under real pressure to scrap the 1% cap on public sector wages and UNISON is leading the fight to get you the pay rise you deserve by calling for:

- an end to the pay cap
- government money for an immediate pay rise for all public sector workers
- an end to government interference in bargaining arrangements for all public sector pay.

We can't miss this opportunity. They won't pay up if we don't all speak up. Get involved in our campaign and help us win. Together we can do it.

Find out how at unison.org.uk/payupnow

Not in UNISON?

Join today and help us make a difference to your pay.

Join online at joinunison.org or call us free on 0800 0 857 857