

Equality Rep Case Study

Davie O'Donnell, RMT



Davie has been an Equality Rep for RMT since 2016.

I think we need Equality Reps because society is changing so fast and people need to be reminded of what is appropriate. Particularly in the industry I work in, which is very male-dominated, you sometimes need to remind people of language and conduct. Part of my responsibility as an Equality Rep is to preempt potentially inappropriate behaviour, and act on it before anything happens.

Equality Reps are so valuable to workplaces. I remember I used to work with someone who would often make really inappropriate jokes, and we were at odds a lot of the time. He developed a medical issue and was unfairly dismissed because of this. Following his dismissal, he came to me for help. I was able to tell him about his rights and as a result, he challenged his dismissal and was able to keep his job. I feel like this is a really great example of how Equality Reps are important in the workplace.

The bulk of my role involves signposting people to company policies and other resources that may be able to assist them. The most common issue I deal with revolves around understanding workplace policy.

“Having support from your union is so important and affects the impact you have as a rep”

Davie, Equality Rep, RMT



The time you spend working on Equality Rep duties can vary from week to week. Some weeks you might not hear from anyone, and other weeks you could speak to people every other day. The post of Equality Rep, in my opinion, doesn't have to be full on.

I have a lot of support from my union in my role as Equality Rep. Having support from your union is so important and affects the impact you have as a rep. If you have union support it gives you leverage and encouragement in your role. I was fortunate because my employer was also very supportive and they formed an agreement with RMT that gives me paid release to attend training and development opportunities.

Currently, I don't have much interaction with any other Equality Reps. An Equality Network would definitely be something I would use. It would be great to speak to like-minded individuals and share good practice. I have previously had issues with my employer around reasonable adjustments, and so feel strongly the role of Equality Rep is an important one.