

Equality Rep Network Newsletter

February 2020 - Edition 1



Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of Scottish Union Learning's Equality Rep Network Newsletter. Scottish Union Learning is developing the Equality Rep Network to open the lines of communication between Equality Reps, share good practice, offer guidance, and increase the effectiveness of Equality Reps.

This newsletter will be issued quarterly and will be circulated to STUC affiliated unions, trade union officers, reps and activists in Scotland with an interest in equalities issues. It includes recent equalities updates, government equalities updates, a section from contributors, case studies from Equality Reps, and a save the date section.

Social Media

Are you an Equality Rep or do you work around equalities in your work? If so, join [our Facebook group](#) and network with other reps. Our social media group is a cross union initiative aimed to encourage the sharing of good practice, and offer support for Equality Reps in their role.

Podcast - Equality Matters!

Scottish Union Learning is currently running a podcast, Equality Matters!, once every two months. The details of our first podcast can be found on our website and includes a general overview of equalities, with guest speaker and journalist Layla-Roxanne Hill, and SUL Development Officer, Tommy Breslin.

Training and Development

Scottish Union Learning organises ULR Development days on a quarterly basis. In order to encourage joint work, we are inviting Equality Reps to attend these days. Check out our website for any upcoming training and development opportunities for Equality Reps. Updates will also be issued on the Facebook group.

For more information, please contact emclaren@stuc.org.uk

Union Equalities Update



RMT



“October the 18th 2019 saw the first ever RMT Scotland's Women's Group educational meeting, held in Inverness. The weekend event, held at Fairways Golf Club and opened by Rhoda Grant MSP, was a fantastic success in terms of the learning received.

We had a full Saturday of visitors, all from other unions or businesses, and for the RMT women in attendance, everyone was well received. That said there were favourites; Sarah Collins and Claire Peden were amazing company for both days and really showed the benefits of having short courses available to all union women. Khadija and Nighet were the group's absolute favourites and their inclusion course was thought provoking!

The hope is that we convince RMT to look at training several women to deliver this training on our own behalf. The most disappointing aspect for me, was that I could not find RMT women in Scotland to do this, and that must change.”

Kim Gibson, RMT





“Within Unite Scotland our Regional Equalities Committees have been extremely busy over the last quarter. Here are just a few of the things we’ve been involved in.

Our Women’s Committee ran a coaching school on the 13th to the 15th of September at the Golden Jubilee Hotel Clydebank. This yearly event empowers & supports Unite women to become leaders & realise their own potential & skills.

Within our BAEM committee we continuously come up against the issue of under representation of BAEM activists in our union & our wider movement. To address this we ran an event on the 9th of October on the importance of “Building Black Power”. On the back of this event we recruited 3 new BAEM activists from different sectors onto our committee.

To increase the political knowledge and power within our young members in Unite we ran a political school at which both Richard Leonard & Jeremy Corbyn spoke.

This event took place from the 30th of August to the 1st of September & the feedback on this event was excellent.

To mark World Mental Health Day our regional disabled members committee ran an educational event for our committee on the 10th of October.

To mark Transgender Day Of Remembrance Unite Scotland LGBT Committee held an event in conjunction with the STUC LGBT & Women’s committee. This was held at Unite, John Smith House, on the 20th November 2019.



SSTA is currently working on an advice note for members on the menopause - from both the members view, and some guidelines for managers around this. In addition to this, SSTA is working on a summary sheet around the protected characteristics in the 2010 Equality Act.



In September 2019 USDAW launched our ‘Usdaw - Together Against Hate’ campaign in response to rising levels of hate crime across the UK, and hate increasingly being recorded as a motivator in violent and verbal abuse against shop workers. The Campaign aims at raising awareness of what a hate crime is and how to report it. Our website above, contains more information about the campaign, links to campaign resources including a leaflet aimed at reps and members, a survey and poster.

The campaign will be regularly refreshed to shine a spotlight on the experiences of different groups. In October 2019, during Black History Month, we took the opportunity to highlight race hate crime and we highlighted the experiences of Disabled members during Disability History Month in November.



In 2019 the FDA undertook significant research into flexible working in the Civil Service, in partnership with the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership at King’s College London. The research was launched by Julia Gillard, AC, the first – and only – woman Prime Minister of Australia, at an event in central London. This was a great event and reiterated the capacity of the FDA to deliver fantastic opportunities to members, building on the ongoing success of our Women and BME into Leadership Conferences.

Work continues to reinvigorate our equality networks, with the LGBT steering group meeting recently to discuss the results of our survey of members. We’re keen to link in with A:Gender, a fantastic organisation that supports trans and intersex staff across government. We’re continuing our call for departments to publish not only their gender pay gap, but also pay gaps relating to their other protected characteristics. This information will help us to make a real difference for our members who aren’t paid equally for the work they do.



UNISON Scotland's Disabled Members' Committee held two seminars for senior activists in October 2019 from regional funding to raise the profile of disabled members across Scotland and to reinforce the relevance and importance of disability issues across our branches.

Two seminar highlights included an input from the Beatson Cancer Charity giving advice on reasonable adjustments for cancer sufferers (and other serious life changing/life threatening illnesses).

Fifteen years on from winning her landmark case, Susan Archibald spoke to delegates. Susan won her case on appeal at the House of Lords for disability discrimination through the employer's failure to provide reasonable adjustments. That case was pivotal in shaping the Equality Act 2010.

Scottish Government Update

In February 2019, the Scottish Government published the Fair Work Action Plan.

The plan outlines the Scottish Government's approach in achieving the 2025 vision for Fair Work.

You can find more information on the [Fair Work Action Plan](#) report here.

The Fair Work Convention published a report in Spring 2019 entitled 'Fair Work in Scotland's Social Care Sector'.

"The report calls for urgent interventions by policy makers, commissioners and leaders in the social care sector to improve the quality of work and employment for the 200,000 strong workforce in Scotland.

The report makes five recommendations including for the Scottish Government to support the creation of a new sector body that establishes minimum standards for fair work terms and conditions and to reform social care commissioning"

You can find details of the report by visiting the [Fair Work Convention's website](#).

TUC Education

Far-right extremism is on the rise. Hate speech spreads unchecked online, and acts of far-right terrorism have rocketed. But unions have stronger weapons than the far-right — solidarity, trust, and of course, our union reps and activists. Together we can keep our workplaces hate-free. TUC Education recently launched a new eNote on Tackling the Rise of the Far-Right. It is a short online course that reps can complete for free on their phone, tablet or PC in less than an hour.

Developed by reps and policy experts at the TUC, it covers why we oppose the far-right, who they are, and how we can stop them.

Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for reps to think about different strategies to challenge far-right views in the workplace. Talking to workers who have been influenced by the far-right can be difficult. Often they're perfectly good people, just with bad opinions. Reps are at the forefront of challenging far-right opinions in the workplace and educating others on the real reasons behind workers' concerns and problems.

The eNote can be accessed via the [TUC Education website](#).

Dave's got a problem with immigrants

They're just too many. They take our jobs, they undercut British workers, and they lower wages for us all. It's got to stop!

Can you help him reconsider his views? Select a response to get started.

Actually, studies show that an increase in migrant workers doesn't lead to lower wages. →

You're right — wages are too low. What do you think the minimum wage should be? →

2019 STUC Women's Conference Update

Rachel Thomson

In October 2019, Perth saw over 150 women trade unionists arrive to attend the STUC's 92nd Annual Women's Conference. This year's theme was "Fighting to Eradicate Child Poverty" and a number of motions were debated with regards to how we, as a movement, fight back against the causes of child poverty.

Some may ask why child poverty was chosen as the theme for this year's Women's Conference. Child poverty is often spoken about as an isolated issue, removed from the context of a family's income and the gendered nature of poverty. However, the reality is that child poverty is caused by parents, most often women, experiencing poverty due to low wages, an insufficient benefit system and ever rising housing and childcare costs. This then creates a wave of instability within family incomes, causing children to miss out on experiences more affluent young people take for granted.

Experiences like school trips, after school clubs, having a new warm winter jacket and living in a warm home. As Joyce Stevenson, this year's chair, stated, "Only when we lift women out of poverty will we begin to see an improvement in the fight to end child poverty."

Child poverty is a women's issue when lone-parent families, 90% of which are headed by women, are at such high risk of poverty. At the moment, 45% of children in lone-parent families are experiencing poverty.

With women more than twice as dependent on social security than men, changes to social security and 'welfare reform' have put women at a greater risk of deeper and sustained poverty.

One Parent Families Scotland report that by 2021 single parents will lose 20% of their income due to UK welfare reform.

This is around £5,250 a year, a catastrophic amount of money for a family to lose. This predicted increase will leave 62% of children in lone-parent households in poverty, with mothers struggling each month to get by for the sake of her children. In a country as wealthy as Scotland, this is unacceptable.

Women's poverty is inextricably linked to child poverty when women with children are unable to get flexible jobs that will allow them to care for their children and/or pay for adequate childcare. Even for those who can balance working and parenting, the gender pay gap and undervaluing of predominately female jobs like caring, cleaning and retail, are leaving women without adequate wages to raise families.

Disabled women and BME women also face increased barriers in the workforce, making them and their children more at risk of being swept into poverty. Many disabled women find it difficult to find jobs that will support them to meet their full potential, and BME women in the UK are still facing structural racism, racist attitudes in the workplace and an even starker pay gap than that of their white counterparts.

On top of this, it has been well documented that cuts to social security over the last decade have hit disabled women and BME women harder.

We know that we can solve child poverty, and we know what we need to do. At Conference, delegates voted in support of lobbying governments to tackle the gender pay gap, scrap the benefit cap and to restore the annual uprating of working age benefits. Delegates also voted to put pressure on employers to pay all staff at least the real living wage, to get rid of age-based wage rates and end the use of zero hours contracts.

Ultimately, it's by standing together and fighting back against austerity, cuts to social security, the gender pay gap, the undervaluation of "women's work" that we solve child poverty. The 2019 Women's Conference was a step towards this.

Equality Rep Case Study

Linda Ford, Prospect

Linda has been an Equality Rep for Prospect since 2012 and is based in Dundee.

I feel we need Equality Reps because there is still way too much discrimination. If there was no discrimination and no issues around inequality then we wouldn't need Equality Reps; but there is, and we do. I became an Equality Rep because it seemed like the perfect fit for me. I am female, I identify as disabled and am LGBTQ+. The fact discrimination routinely occurs in workplaces is the main reason I became an Equality Rep. Even if you feel your workplace is doing well on equalities, discrimination still exists. This is what I want to fight against. Being an Equality Rep has given me confidence. You get the opportunity to attend conferences, speak at events, and gain recognition for working around equalities. I feel strongly that our young reps need support more than anything. My younger self would have walked away and not bothered, so it's very encouraging to hear and speak with young reps. Most of the issues I deal with are around sickness absence and management policies.

Mental Health is a topic I am increasingly dealing with, but it is a difficult topic to deal with. On average, a case could last 9-10 months – although many are considerably shorter. My role has helped make colleagues aware of their rights, and has prevented people from being discriminated against.

Overall, I feel my work as an Equality Rep has had a positive impact, especially around raising awareness of discrimination in the workplace. There have been a number of changes made within my workplace that have happened as a result of Equality Reps.

For example, policies around wellbeing and menopause are going to be established and my employer now undertakes an Equality Impact Assessment on every policy. They have become a disability confident employer with a disability action plan, and have set up an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group. Policies and awareness around disabilities and reasonable adjustments have been enhanced and on the whole, people have a greater knowledge of their workplace rights. Overall, my employer has become better as a result of us Equality Reps.

We need people in workplaces to argue the point for equality.

Undoubtedly, unions do a lot of positive work around equalities, but it's important we are offering sufficient support to Equality Reps, and actually getting equality right, at all levels within our unions. Unions should be putting equality at the heart of everything they do. An Equality Rep Network would facilitate the transactional relationship between reps – you help them, they help you. But any network needs the support of union branches and HQ.

National Autistic Society Employment Support

Did you know that 1 in 100 people in Scotland are on the autistic spectrum? Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them. Unfortunately due to these issues and a lack of understanding around

them, many people with autism are unemployed. Just 32% of those with autism in the UK are in paid employment and only 16% are in full time work. In reality there are many simple adaptations you can make to your workplace to make it more autism friendly as outlined in the reports and resources below which we would encourage union reps to use to negotiate policies and procedures to make their workplaces as inclusive as possible.

[Good practice report by Autism Europe](#)

[ACAS research paper](#)

[CIPD Research Report](#)

[TUC Autism Report](#)

By Andy Crosbie

Save the Date



February

LGBTQ+ History Month

Tinnitus Awareness Week - 3rd February - 9th February

Children's Mental Health Week - 3rd February - 9th February

Time to Talk Day - 6th February

International Epilepsy Day - 10th February

World Encephalitis Day 22nd February

Rare Disease Day - 29th February

March:

Ovarian and Prostate Cancer Month

Self harm day - 1st March

Eating Disorder Week - 2nd March - 8th March

World Hearing Day - 3rd March

Scottish Apprenticeship Week - 2nd March - 6th March

Disabled Access Day - 16th March

World Downsyndrome Day - 21st March

World Bipolar Day - 30th March

Neurodiversity Celebration Week - 16th - 20th March

World Autism Awareness Week 30th March - 5th April

April:

Stress Awareness Month

Parkinsons Awareness Month

World Autism Awareness Day - 2nd April

World Health Day - 7th April

MS Awareness Week - 20th April - 26th April

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE NEWSLETTERS,
PLEASE CONTACT EMCLAREN@STUC.ORG.UK**