



# National Newsletter



No.10 Summer 2020

## Coronavirus

It has been without doubt one of the most unsettling years we have ever faced. Coronavirus has caused a great deal of upset, mental hardship and distress to many and some of us have sadly lost loved ones and friends to this awful virus.

UNISON has been working hard to react quickly in workplaces to keep them as safe as possible and to ensure staff are always managed well and protected.

## Scottish Equality Liaison Group

UNISON Scotland are delighted to inform you of the formation of the Scottish Equality Liaison Group on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. All Scottish Self Organised Groups have come together to discuss inequalities in the recovery from Covid-19 and the next steps for UNISON.

It was very clear that Covid-19 has disproportionately affected members within SOGs and especially those who have intersections.

We took actions to agree to work as a group during the pandemic. Review the adverse impact of Covid-19 on equality groups and relay to UNISON for parliamentary review. Review equality demands and relay these with UNISON for embedding in service groups and with Scottish Government. We will also help promote SOG Involvement in Health & Safety Rep campaign - Be on the safe side.

We know that individuals from marginalised or disadvantaged groups can already experience poorer outcomes in healthcare are often disproportionately affected by the wider healthcare implications of the current situation.

LGBT+ people are:

- are less likely to access healthcare when they need it. They are more likely to be socially isolated and not have contact or support when they need it and this increases with age.
- more likely to experience domestic abuse or family abuse where their lifestyle choice creates an unwelcome atmosphere. Close living in a lockdown situation most likely increases that risk.
- more likely to be homeless or incorrectly housed leading to increased risks. This means they may not be able to self-isolate.
- more likely to be living with HIV and the emotional impact of this and reliant on continued treatment which could have been disrupted by covid. This would put their immune system at risk and increase risk of dying from covid.
- Trans and non-binary people have had treatments cancelled due to the virus and may now be in emotional turmoil due to loss of hormone treatments or psychological effects of loss of support services.



All these increase in severity where intersections exist such as racism or disablism and homophobia, biphobia or transphobia and this increases with ageing.

Given the evidence of increased and disproportionate effect on the BAME community and those who may also be LGBT+ and potentially elderly, we need to consider the impact on those in long term care in the community and those who are isolated with no support network.

### **To support our LGBT+ members and their communities UNISON must:**

Be at the heart of any NHS recovery plan giving clear assurance that minority groups are supported with essential services particular to their needs. We have seen erosion of these services over the last decade and strengthen these where intersections exist.

Fight for a National care service with tailored equality needs / care standards for those within minority groups and especially with intersections.

Fight to strengthen the Gender Recognition Act, especially in respect of issues faced by our Non-Binary and Trans members before and during the pandemic, and ensure they have access to care and support.

Strengthen our internal communication strategy, contact details for members, focus on increased email contacts and a drive to increase social media involvement of members to ensure continued contact and support especially during isolation.

Push Scottish Government to improve communication services to remote areas where members may have poor or no internet facilities. Underpin a communication framework for Scotland addressing the inequality faced by those in rural communities.

Work with Scottish Government to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the economy and have a strategy for investment. Paying attention to those who may have been made redundant or homeless and how we support those individuals.

## **Virtual – Pride is a Protest – 01 August 2020**



Like you, we have missed being out and about at the various events that we attend during the year. We have missed the chance to talk about why pride is still a protest, why being a member of a trade union is so important and sharing with people the many materials that we have.

To try and get ourselves noticed, we are going to hold a UNISON pride is a protest event. We are going to run it as a Facebook event, and will put up photos of us out and about over the past few years, links to all the documents that we produce, share materials from the other self-organised groups and put up some videos of members and activists telling us why pride is still a protest, and why you should join a union

The event will take place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August from 11am.

## **OUT IN UNISON**

'Out in UNISON' is only published three times a year, but you can get monthly updates direct to your inbox by signing up for our LGBT+ e-bulletin at

[unison.org.uk/out](https://unison.org.uk/out)

## UNISON National LGBT+ Conference 2020

This year's conference was due to take place in Liverpool and this unfortunately has been cancelled for safety reasons.

The National LGBT+ committee are currently looking at a potential for an online event. As soon as we have more information, we will share this.

## ILGA Europe Conference

The ILGA-Europe team is working on creating an alternative to the in-person Annual Conference. It is quite difficult to recreate the Annual Conference as we know it in a digital format. Everyone in the staff and board does however feel strongly about organising an online event where our movement can regroup and engage on some of the important questions we are facing.

They are currently developing the concept and exploring the best ways to bring the diversity of voices from the LGBTI movement to think about what the future needs to hold for us. They know one thing already – their theme will be **“Protect, Adapt and Rally”**.

## Annual General Meeting

This year we have faced unprecedented situations and have had to adapt quickly in the face of Coronavirus. This year's AGM may be quite different and indeed may need to be deferred.

We will discuss with UNISON Scotland and look at options for the event and when we have more information, we shall ensure this is sent out to everyone.



## Health and Safety at work

UNISON is launching a new campaign, 'Be on the safe side', to recruit more safety reps in workplaces across the UK – as the need for them becomes greater than ever.

The union has campaigned tirelessly on health and safety issues to protect its members at work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has also supported its safety reps in carrying out their difficult role, whether ensuring that members have access to correct PPE, conducting workplace risk assessments or addressing the risks to Black and vulnerable workers.

### COVID-19: Your rights at work

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fact that it vital for every workplace to have a safety rep,” said UNISON’s acting national secretary Donna Rowe-Merriman. “A workplace without a safety rep potentially puts the safety of our members at risk.

“It is UNISON safety reps who keep our members safe, by holding employers to account and ensuring the voice of members is heard.”

And with the significant increase in membership of recent months, it is more important than ever for UNISON to recruit more safety reps, she added.

“UNISON members in schools, hospitals, offices, call centres and care homes know exactly what they and their colleagues need to be able to work safely while carrying out their duties.

“Their work skills are invaluable as a safety rep – whether as a cleaner working with chemicals, a catering assistant working with children or someone working in large office complexes or call centres, no-one understands the job better.”



Safety reps have certain legal rights which can help them make a difference for their members. And they are entitled to time off to perform their role. Being a Safety rep means you will be playing a crucial role in making sure your workplace is safe, secure and clean for all your colleagues and service users.

You will also gain new skills and meet others who are passionate about workplace safety.

### **What do Safety reps do?**

Safety reps:

- talk to members about their health and safety issues and work together with management to resolve these issues.
- investigate potential hazards
- raise concerns with your employer to improve safety in the workplace and deal with specific problems that arise at work
- promote better health and safety in the workplace and encourage everyone to get involved in the union – UNISON is the union that gets things done.

### **How do I become a safety rep?**

Although there is legally no training required your branch may ask you to undertake some training. Safety reps are entitled to time off for training. Your branch will help in getting this agreed by your employer.

UNISON provide various online options including a short introductory course, or a course of six 90-minute classes, once a week. There will be a chance to chat with other new safety reps and get more one to one time with the tutor if you need it. There are also other specialist courses, including one on COVID-19.

We also have an online community, our Organising Space, where you can chat with other Health and Safety reps around the country.

To start your journey, contact your local Branch or Regional office.

## **Contact and Information**

**Facebook Group – Unison Scotland LGBT (ask to join private group)**

**Twitter - @UNISONScotlandLGBT**

**Instagram - unisonscotlgbtplus**