



# Congress Awards 2017



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# THE ELEANOR MARX AWARD

## 2017

### Award Winner: Taranjit Chana, London Region

In winning the Eleanor Marx Award Taranjit Chana was chosen as the most inspirational woman by the selection committee of the National Women's Taskforce. She also received by far, the highest number of nominations from her peers.

The best way to introduce Taranjit is through the words of the many people sharing the reasons why they were nominating her. Here are just a few of those reasons;

"Taranjit is a good sister she works tirelessly to help to eradicate prejudices on all equality fronts. Her life in general is geared to change the views of people to be all inclusive. She works really hard in everything she does but still has time for everyone. She has been a very instrumental person in mobilising people especially women in getting active in their union. Taranjit is unstinting in her commitment for fighting for justice and fairness for ordinary and oppressed peoples."

Her work cannot be fully put into words here are some of the things she does; raising the profile of the GMB, organising, leading, recruiting, inspiring, delivering training, organising marches and whether it's volunteering at women's refuges, giving up her spare time to give free advice on the radio for Asian women, campaigning for LGBT plus championing women's rights in the workplace, working with the refugees in Calais, visiting and taking aid to Calais, working as a volunteer or helping women survivors of domestic violence.

She also has diverse experience and skills and has been actively involved in different campaigns to make the working conditions of people better. She is Chairperson GMB Race, a member of the National Equality Forum, a member of the Regional Equality Forum. She designed and delivered training to workplace reps, organised and delivered the GMB Women's Conference. She is always happy to give support and advice and guidance to others at Conferences and Congress.

There is just so much she gets through on a weekly basis, it is difficult to name them all, and we are starting to think she is actually a family of triplets.

We are all so proud of this shy unassuming woman and her tremendous achievements. As a bonus, she does everything with a smile, empathy and good humour. We would be lost without her, we are so lucky to have her.

I am sure you will agree Taranjit Chana is a truly inspirational woman and a very worthy winner of the Eleanor Marx Award.

# PRESIDENTS LEADERSHIP AWARDS FOR EQUALITY 2017

## *Cat 1 - Most Inspirational Individual on Equality in the GMB or at work*

### **Winner: David Lascelles (Midland and East Coast Region)**

David is a long standing member of the REF, central to the Regions equality campaigns and a figure head for the REF. His knowledge, guidance and passion for LGBT+ issues is exceptional and he has been inspirational to many equality activists. He has been monumental as the vice chair of the REF and is naturally peaceful, progressive in everything he does and a true friend of equality.

### **Highly Commended – Joint winners:**

#### **Paul Sony (Southern Region)**

Paul has been the LGBT+ rep on the REF for many years, instrumental in launching Southern Shout. He has co ordinated the presence LGBT+ members at a number of Regional Pride events, including Brighton Pride. He is an avid digital campaigner using all forms of social media to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues.

#### **May Quigley (Scotland)**

May has excelled at being a GMB Rep, fighting doggedly for members in care homes where employment is precarious and the risk being sacked great, under such circumstances May has managed to put the issues of equality centre stage with her employer.

## *Cat 2 – Most Inspirational Regional Equality Forum (REF)*

### **Winner: North West REF**

For improving member engagement, inspiring activism and ensuring all the equality strands positions are filled and supported. There was active support given by members of the REF by sleeping outside to raise money for Whitechapel charity, which works with people who are sleeping rough and in hostels. The Region has a presences at the regional Pride events.

### **Highly Commended: Southern REF**

Southern REF has been leading on a number of innovate equality initiatives, including engagement of local LGBTI+ member (as well as Brighton Pride), a Womens' Conference, mobilising for the Women's march against Trump, blood donation campaign, organising Black Minority Ethnic workers and having a strong digital presences. The Forum has grown in stature and has become a visible presence of equality across the Region.

### *Cat 3 – Most Inspirational equality project for organising*

#### **Winner: North Yorkshire and Derbyshire – Mental Health Matters**

This campaign was initiated and developed by activists in the Region, which included an exemplary use of digital media to raise awareness, engage and encourage activism on the issue of mental health. This led to increased knowledge in the Region and support from the Labour Party.

#### **Highly Commended: Northern – Mental Health Matters**

This campaign inspired many activists to support and get involved in the campaign but also to recognise that we could all be subject to a mental illness. The campaign also highlighted the need to challenge the stigma associated with mental illness and work with employers to support their employees

### *Cat 4 – Most inspirational project for making a difference*

#### **Winner: London Region – Mental Health at Work Training**

The first training programme was developed and delivered by members of the Regional Equality Forum, with engagement from external experts. This was delivered to workplace reps, many of which were from Asda and the positive feedback showed that Reps had developed greater understanding and confidence to engage their employer.

The second training programme was supported by the National Health Safety Department on the subject of mental health. Both training programme were oversubscribed and resulted in Reps being able to develop policies on mental health, provide support for members and involve their employer.

# **THE MARY MACARTHUR HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD 2017**

## **Award Winner: Lee Hillam, London Region Cambridge 2 Branch**

Lee is recognised both for role as a Health and Safety Representative at Cambridge City Council, and his work at national level in designing a worker involvement tool for the waste industry which has been adopted by the HSE's WISH (Waste Industry Safety and Health) Forum.

Lee's role as a Safety Representative sees him engage with both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridge District Council on waste and recycling issues. Lee played a critical role in ensuring that proper oversight was provided and maintained in the move to a shared services model and beyond. Lee has driven the development of new guidance, including a handbook on safe waste practices; has participated in audits of both waste activities and vehicle working practices; and initiated reviews of many existing policies to ensure that the best practice from both councils is followed.

Lee has used this approach to organise and involve contractors across Cambridge, and he extended this work to the national level when he became involved in the HSE WISH Forum. Lee facilitated the workshop on employee involvement at the 2016 WISH Conference, and from this he developed a worker involvement tool for the waste and recycling sector on his own initiative and using his own IT skills.

Organising and raising standards in a sector with a poor health and safety track record is impressive, and Lee has been recognised for the positive impact his work has made both within Cambridge and nationally.

## **Runner-Up: Rob Burgon, North West and Irish Region N45 Water Branch**

Rob is recognised for his work in tackling mental health issues in United Utilities, in the face of management seeking to impose a corporate approach to the issue.

Rob has driven a number of campaigns within United Utilities, particularly the Dying to Work campaign; the involvement of the workforce in risk assessment and policy development; and the introduction of "Take 30" – a series of task and skills based questions to be answered before commencing work. If all questions cannot be answered satisfactorily, then the work does not begin and the matter is escalated to management.

Rob is particularly recognised for his work on mental health. His employer attempted to introduce mental health champions and first aiders, to be selected from 'wellbeing champions'. Rob challenged this, made sure that the employer recognised that mental health is a trade union issue, and has developed this into an organising programme including a mental health day for reps, and the introduction of TUC training on the issue.

Tackling mental health in the utilities is a difficult task, and Rob deserves great credit for facing this challenge and not taking no for an answer.

## **Runner Up: Helena Sharpe, London Region L45 Luton Branch**

Helena is recognised for her response when her Asda store in Luton caught fire and was severely damaged, particularly in the support and advice she provided to her colleagues.

On Monday 6th March, a fire broke out at the Asda Store in Luton. The fire gutted the store and caused huge damage. Helena was on her day off when the fire occurred, but immediately contacted her GMB officer to put in place support mechanisms for her members and colleagues. By the end of the day, an email and text message was sent out to see who needed help, and how this could be provided.

The next day, she worked with her Officer to set up a support centre in the Luton office, which saw support given to 40 colleagues, and recruited 15 new members into GMB. As a result, Helena has been placed in the nearby Stevenage store by Asda as a specialist GMB liaison colleague, and a focal point to deal with the company on developments at the Luton site. Although the circumstances were exceptional, Helena went above and beyond the duties normally expected of a Health and Safety Representative, and her outstanding contribution has been duly recognised.

