

# **GMB CONGRESS 2018**

## **CEC SPECIAL REPORT**

# **NATIONAL EQUALITY ORGANISING STRATEGY**

**WE ARE  
GMB**

**UNION**

# National Equality Organising Strategy 2018

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2008, GMB Congress passed the Equality Through Inclusion strategy. In the decade since, GMB has established the National Equality Forum (NEF), Regional Equality Forums (REFS), Self-Organised Groups (SOGs) and now guarantees representation on the CEC for equality strands. The Women's Task Force has completed its work, and the fruits of that labour are being seen as more women are progressing through GMB structures to be senior organisers and National Secretaries. There is still further to go, but GMB has made huge strides in ensuring gender equality through our structures.
- 1.2 We must now ensure that all equality issues are mainstream in GMB.
- 1.3 That means equality activists being central to the organising agenda, and ensuring all reps are aware of and equipped to campaign on equality issues.
- 1.4 GMB has the power to make real change happen in our workplaces for women, LGBTQ+, BAME, young, disabled and migrant workers, that benefits all of us.
- 1.5 We must use the equality bargaining agenda to recruit, retain, empower and activate membership - working to ensure that all Equality campaigns and activities support the on-going work of building the Union, empowering members, developing activists and delivering change.
- 1.6 Equality should not sit separately to our branch and workplace structures, it should be at the heart of them.
- 1.7 This report sets out the next stage of delivering equality for all at GMB.

## 2. The equality bargaining and organising agenda

- 2.1 GMB can and does deliver change for GMB members on equality. In workplaces we fight for equal pay, seek to ensure workplace/employment policies do not discriminate against BAME workers and that adjustments are made for people who need support to stay in work. From ensuring equality impact assessments are undertaken when employers make changes, to representing individual members who have faced harassment and bullying, GMB delivers on equality for our members.
- 2.2 This report seeks to formalise, enhance and promote that work as a formal equality bargaining agenda.
- 2.3 In our negotiations with employers, there should always be an equality 'ask' on the table so that we are proactively promoting equality in the workplace, not just reacting when something goes wrong. Where something does go wrong, in line with GMB@work, we should ensure that we tackle the wider issue not just the individual case and build the union while we do so.
- 2.4 GMB nationally must work to support regions and activists to drive this agenda, supplying the resources, training and materials needed to make the workplace a more equal place.

### **3. Equality as mainstream at GMB**

- 3.1 On the back of calls from activists across the country – and a number of motions on equality organising to this congress - the challenge is now to put the resource and support in place to ensure that committed and talented activists have the tools and training they need to be able to practically deliver on equality issues in the workplace.
- 3.2 GMB must ensure that all equality activists have the tools they need to represent members on bread and butter workplace issues when it comes to equality, and that all officers and activists understand it is their role to deliver on the equality organising agenda – it does not sit separately from negotiation, bargaining and representation, but is essential to it.
- 3.3 We must ensure that we not only react when our members face hardship and discrimination, but that we are proactive in seeking real and practical change too.
- 3.4 This section covers:
  - Taking stock and planning ahead
  - Making the equality bargaining agenda ‘what we do’
  - Tools to do the job – making sure activists and organisers have the tools they need to recruit and deliver on equality
  - Celebrating success
  - Mainstream within our structures

#### **3a. Knowing where we are, so we know where we’re going**

1. Taking stock of our current position as a union is important. It allows us to look at where we are to measure progress. In 2017, GMB undertook an exercise to find out more about our membership.
2. We know that while almost half of our membership is female (49%), that figure is not reflected in our rep numbers. Only 28% of workplace and health and safety reps are women, with 37.5% of Learning Reps being female, and 41% of Branch Equality Officers.
3. GMB’s own staff structures show a preponderance of women, with 58% of employees being women. We know that this is not reflected in the most senior positions in GMB. Progress has been made in recent years, the gender pay gap figures showed a decrease in GMB’s gender pay gap from over 30% in 2014 to 25.5% in April last year. The main reason for this is not that we do not have enough women at the higher levels of the union – which is undoubtedly true – but that we have more women than men on lower pay grades. In previous years, the ‘staff to officer’ program has helped to break down the generations old divide between support staff and the officer corps. The make-up of our staff is changing, but those changes, training and opportunities take time to bed in and progress – after all, no new women officers can be appointed where there are no vacancies.
4. Our age breakdown shows that two thirds of our membership is between the ages of 25 -64 years.

5. We now hold information on the ethnicity of 64% of our membership.

Ethnicity	Percentage (of those with identification)
White	82
Chinese	0.1
Indian	2.4
Pakistani	1.8
Black African	1.7
Black British	1.7
Black Caribbean	1
Bangladeshi	0.5
Irish	0.5
Other	7.9

6. 18% of GMB members identify as BAME or 'Other', which means our membership based on the data of those who have declared an ethnicity, is more diverse than the population, by 5%.
7. In every category except White, Irish and Black African, BAME women outnumber their male counterparts (and in the case of the latter two categories, only just), however we should note that women are more likely to let us know their ethnicity with close to 30,000 more women stating their ethnicity than men.
8. Approximately 2% of GMB members have told us they are registered disabled, which is lower than the national average (7%), but this is also only information we requested on a one off basis.
9. Understanding who our membership is, is essential so that we can evaluate if we are reflective of the membership we represent. That is why, with the launch of the new GMB website, all members will have access to a facility to update their records on who they are, and how they define.
10. Taking stock is not just about who are members are, it is also about what we do.
11. A National Equality Organising Strategy needs to look at what we do well, how we can share best practice and where we need to improve.
12. In the next 12 months, we will:
- Conduct a union wide audit of a) current equality training across the union and b) all industrially focussed equality training that is currently provided.
  - Develop a National Equality Calendar to highlight key events such as Pride, Young Workers' Month, International Women's Day and key equality conferences in order to ensure a coordinated GMB presence with recruitment materials.
  - Use the national Equality Calendar to evaluate the events we hold internally, and how best to schedule them to fit with regional priorities, national resources and external events (such as TUC strand conferences).
  - Look at how we can ensure our training and events are accessible to all in order to address the gender imbalance in the make-up of our reps.

- Look at how we can use equality data and campaigns to send more relevant, targeted communication to members about campaigns, courses and events aimed at getting more people involved. This includes ensuring we can equality monitor LGBT+ membership and members who wish to declare a disability.
- Look at retention rates of different equality strands to identify if there is a problem retaining members where we have recruited them – as appears to be the case with many young members – in order to develop retention strategies.

### **3b. Making the equality bargaining and organising agenda ‘what we do’**

1. Real and tangible change can be delivered by increasing awareness of equality issues and methodically approaching equality during negotiations.
2. Equality campaigns can be used to grow GMB, equality mapping and bargaining can be used to understand what equality issues are most prevalent in a workplace and to practically tackle them. On issues where people can relate and can see where bargaining can make a positive difference will motivate them to become active.
3. Too often equality can be seen as ‘an add on’ or somehow separate from the industrial agenda, when it is absolutely fundamental to what we are about as a union.
4. That is why the CEC will ask officers, sections and regions to ensure that the equality bargaining agenda is understood, utilised and promoted.
5. In order to make a practical difference on equality, GMB will:
  - Produce guide to equality and diversity workplace mapping for officers and activists.
  - Develop an Equality Bargaining guide, toolkit and training for officers and activists to use. Where ever possible, there should be an equality ‘ask’ on the table to improve workers’ terms, conditions and work life when negotiating with the employers where we have open access to staff.
  - Develop model policies which can be downloaded from the members’ area of the GMB website to make it as easy as possible for all reps to secure equality and diversity policies in the workplace.
  - Work with Equality Strands to produce strands specific recruitment and organising materials, ensuring that these are embedded in the real lives of our members, working with strand representatives on the REFs and NEF. These should include toolkits on issues such as the gender pay gap, the pay gap for BAME workers, LGBT+ organisation, identifying and tackling modern slavery and highlighting and making adjustment for all disabilities, including hidden disabilities which by their very nature are more difficult to identify and support.
  - The National Equality Team will work with regions pilot different ways of organising and achieving change.

### **3c. Tools to do the job – making sure activists and organisers have the tools they need to recruit and deliver on equality**

1. Achieving true equality is not passive. It requires activists and officers to fight for it.

2. Training and resources are central to ensuring that reps and activists have the skills needed to represent members on equality issues, but also to bargain, recruit and negotiate on equality.
3. GMB will:
  - Ensure that equality bargaining is covered within GMB@work training, so that reps understand what can be achieved on equality issues for our members.
  - Build into every course or event held by GMB Equality, a clear route to becoming a GMB rep or workplace organiser.
  - Seek to increase the number of workplace reps from all backgrounds by looking at how we deliver training for members in unorganised workplaces. Not all members have release to attend weekday training courses, and many have caring responsibilities. This is more likely to be the case for women, BAME workers, young and disabled members. This will help us grow the union, and also to bring through talented activists to make our own structures more representative of our membership.
  - Encourage equality strand activists to get active in their branches, as Branch Equality Officers but in other positions as well (that is key to making equality a mainstream issue, equality is not just something undertaken only by an Equality Officer). All branch offices should be champions for equality!
  - Provide 'off the shelf' equality training courses that can be delivered nationally and in regions as needed – this will empower and support more senior activists and officers to be able to deliver training on equality issues and the bargaining agenda.
  - Work with the National Training Officer and Regional Education Officers to make training and events as accessible and inclusive as possible in order to improve participation (investigating the use of conference calls, video conferencing, webinars and e-learning)
  - Ensure Self-Organised Groups and Regional Equality Forums have access to training with the intention that each SOG and REF will set up and run a campaign on an industrial issue that involves reps and targets potential members.
  - Develop a network of reps and officers who are ready, willing and able to offer translation services to branches and members.
  - Continue to work with Unionline to provide materials in multiple languages as appropriate to the workplace.

### **3d. Celebrating success: leading by example**

1. GMB make a huge difference for our members, be it for the low paid, predominantly BAME women organised at Aramark in Southern region, the migrant workers now on full time contracts instead of agency contracts in Midland and East Coast or dyslexic workers who have new workplace policies to support them.
2. We need to celebrate that success, turn it into best practice and use it to show other workers why they should join GMB:

- Use all communications channels to celebrate success, share best practice and include as many people as possible.
- Through the new GMB website, promote equality campaigns, ensuring there are enhanced resources for activists.
- Review the President's National Equality Award for Leadership in order to reflect our focus on building the union, delivering around equality, recruitment and activism, with a re-launch in 2018.

## **4. Women in leadership**

- 4.1 In recent years, GMB has made strides in promoting women within the union. The measures taken over the last decade were always going to take time to bear fruit, but true equality is not something that should have to wait. On reporting of the Gender Pay Gap earlier in 2018, the General Secretary was clear that the report made 'uncomfortable reading' and must be addressed.
- 4.2 If we are honest, our structures and the composition of our Officer base were such that for women to progress to the most senior positions in the union, it would take time. The traditional structures of the union meant there was an historic divide between 'staff' and 'officers' with staff predominantly being women in support staff roles, and officers being predominantly male and in industrial positions. The 'staff to officer' scheme – which has since been renamed the Employee Development Scheme – provided a route to career progression for support staff in order to break down that divide. That has led to a level of career progression for women in GMB, but going from a support or administrative role to having a sheet does not happen overnight.
- 4.3 Right now, we have more women senior organisers than ever, and more women in senior positions at National Office, but that the progress has not been big enough or quick enough.
- 4.4 In a union with fifty percent female membership, we must do better at helping women to progress through our movement.
- 4.5 Alongside continuing to support, sponsor and promote the Trade Union women's Network – which GMB was instrumental in launching earlier this year - GMB commits to providing leadership training for women at GMB so that we further remove barriers to progression. This must encompass encouraging women to come forward to be leaders in the workplace if we are to see more grassroots women activists progress into leadership roles in the union, as women are underrepresented as reps.
- 4.6 Where we have piloted women only training for activists, the response has been overwhelmingly positive, this is something we must continue to look at.

## **5. Leading through campaigns**

- 5.1 GMB always has and always will lead the movement in campaigning for equality.
- 5.2 High profile campaigns that show what we stand for are important for growing our membership, inspiring and activating members. People will often get active if they see an issue they are passionate about. That should always be at the heart of our campaigning – making a difference, growing the union, getting more people involved.

5.3 Campaigns run by branches, REFs, NEF and SOGs on equality issues, provide a great staging post to show people who may never have had contact with a union before, who we are and what we stand for. We must develop better ways and networks to share news of our successes and how we have overcome challenges to really make a difference.

5.4 In the coming years we must ensure that GMB remains a high profile campaigner to make a difference in the workplace and in wider society including taking the fight to the far right. We will:

- Challenge hatred and discrimination where ever it may be.
- Ensure that in our literature supporting equality issues, we always talk about why trade unions are important to advancing the equality agenda, and how people who want to help us should join us!
- Provide clear routes for those who are passionate about equality issues, to get involved in the industrial work of the union to make a difference for equality in the workplace.
- Ensure GMB has a high profile in responding to hatred, including using political work to drive the equality agenda forward.

## **6. Events and Structures**

### **6a. Conferences and events**

1. As GMB's equality structures have grown and developed, as has the need for want for events, conferences and ways to get people together to share experiences.
2. In 2017/8, this resulted in the National Equality Team delivering eight separate delegations or conferences, alongside participation in TUC Congress and Labour Party Conference and providing support for the NEF and Young Members' Network. The RMA conference is also an annual event. Regionally, this is complemented by regional women's conferences. These events also sit alongside REF and SOG meetings. Young Members' Summit and Women's Conference have been a success, which has led to calls for national summits or conferences for each strand group. In regions with devolved legislation, there are also Scottish and Welsh TUC and Labour Party conferences to consider.
3. If all strands organise a strand summit or conference, there is potential for 11 national delegations or conferences to take place, alongside TUC Congress and Labour conference participation and the day to day running and meetings of the NEF and Young Members' Network. This presents a challenge in terms of resource.
3. The CEC believes that national events and delegations play a crucial role in informing and driving the equality agenda, and GMB should always participate across the movement and maintain a high profile. In order to ensure we get the most out of any resource we put into equality, a review should be conducted of national events with a view to ensuring that:
  - There is a forum for sharing best practice, experiences and advancing the equality agenda within the Union, movement and workplace for equality strands.
  - Resources are most effectively targeted to building the Union and delivering change for our members, ensuring the equality budget matches our aspirations.

- The aim of GMB equality events is to deliver real change for our members by growing the union, organising in workplaces and communities and acting in the press and politically to make change through wider society.

## **6b. A joined up approach in our structures**

1. As discussed previously in this paper, we have vibrant and inclusive equality structures. In regions, SOGs and REFs are driving equality campaigning. Nationally we need to ensure that equality structures are joined up so that members' experience, regional work, congress policy and the priorities of the CEC flow through all aspects of equality at GMB.
2. In the 2019 CEC elections, alongside the women's and race reserved seats, two CEC seats will be created for Young Members, LGBT+ and Disabled members. The CEC seats will sit alongside the work of the National Equality Forum.
3. It is right that our strands are represented on the CEC, and that will ensure equality is always central to GMB's agenda, but it also means that equality will have parallel structures within the union.
4. The National Equality Forum is elected, and comprises of regional and strand reps. They meet quarterly and oversee National Equality Conference, alongside driving forward congress and conference motions to turn grassroots priorities into action.
5. Equality is also covered by the CEC, with the National Equality Officer reporting to CEC and into the Organisation Committee.
6. There is potential for overlap, duplication or – in the worst case – for contradictory activity to take place. For example, a situation could arise that none of the strand reps on the CEC are elected to the NEF, that some strands had the same representatives on the NEF and CEC and other did not.
7. As our structures have developed, and strand representation strengthened, we need to look at how to integrate equality work and representation in the union in the most efficient and common sense way. SMT, NEF and CEC will review the role and responsibilities of branch posts within the rule book to ensure that they fit with the equality organising strategy if this paper is passed by Congress.
8. The SMT and NEF should also review how the different equality strands and structures of the union, particularly the NEF and CEC, work together to ensure equality work is structured, efficient and joined up.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 In the decade since GMB embarked on a proactive equality agenda, the Union has come a long way. This report aims to take it even further, and lays out steps to be taken over the coming years. It will not be a process that last 12 months or even a couple of years, this must be the on-going work of the Union.
- 7.2 In a generation, there has never been greater urgency to having a cohesive, proactive equality strategy. As the rise of Trump in the US and the threat to equality legislation from Brexit show, while equality is mainstream for GMB, it is not mainstream everywhere.

7.3 GMB must challenge hatred and unite where others seek to divide. We must embed equality in all we do, within and outside our union.

## 8. Equality Bargaining in Practice

Examples to include throughout the publication

### Childcare

For working parents – or those who would like to work – the cost and flexibility of childcare is often an issue. Good employers offer flexible working and child care support. This can and should be part of the bargaining agenda to improve the terms, conditions and disposable income of GMB members who are working parents.

### Release for equality training

In GMB Scotland, one branch has negotiated a full day paid release for every steward once a year, where GMB delivers training, and recently covered the Equality Act and what it means for representing members. This has ensured that all stewards with release have a basic understanding of equality issues and legislation.

### The Menopause

A number of regions have worked on producing toolkits and policies for women experiencing the menopause, including London region who also conducted a region wide survey to find out women's real experiences of working while menopausal. A discussion at National Equality Conference brought to the fore a range of ways women could be supported, including small changes in the workplace such as a change of uniform material to make menopausal women more comfortable. That is only a small change, but something that would make a practical and substantial difference to women at that time of life. Wales and South West GMB have worked closely with the TUC to produce a practical toolkit:

<http://wtuclearn.tuc.org.uk/resource/menopause-workplace-toolkit-trade-unionists>

### Period Poverty

In Wales and South West Region, GMB made headlines by successfully campaigning on Period Poverty, alongside local volunteers, convincing Rhondda Cynon Taff Borough Council to supply free sanitary products in all schools. Bridgend County Borough Council has decided to follow RCT's lead on free products. The region is working on expanding this across other local authorities and employers – it's a policy that helps staff and pupils too.

This is an issue Birmingham and West Midlands region have also campaigning on with the 'Bleeding Insane' campaign, helping to collect hundreds of donations of sanitary items for those who need them. The region have also put into practice their own campaign, with GMB offices in the region now making free products available.

### Health and Safety of Women at Work

The National Health and Safety Team produce a number of guides and toolkits for workplace activists on issues linked to equality. A specific guide for women's health and safety has been produced, which gives background information and practical advice. You can find it on the GMB website

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/documents/guides/gmbguide-womenshealthsafety.pdf>

### Mental Health Awareness

Mental health is something both the National Health and Safety Team and GMB Young Members have focussed on in recent years. A 'one stop shop' on mental health awareness was produced to support activists and reps in the workplace.

You can see that on the GMB website: <http://www.gmb.org.uk/gmbguide-mentalhealth.pdf>

Wales and South West Region have also embarked on a widespread effort to train activists in how to address mental health issues. As of writing, over 150 activists have been trained in Mental health awareness and as Mental Health Champions. Those activists are now tasked with developing a Mental health policy to be adopted by their employers.

### **Helping members with dyslexia**

Not all disabilities are visible, many are undiagnosed. Dyslexia and dyspraxia are two such disabilities that can remain undiagnosed for years, and in the case of dyspraxia, with relatively low levels of awareness around it. London region produced a briefing on dyslexia, with Yorkshire region producing a model policy and bargaining guide to help employers make the workplace more accessible – these policies can be implemented at relatively low cost, and can help the productive of the workplace and reduce the rate of staff turnover.

### **Organising migrant workers**

Exploitation and poor working conditions are more likely to exist where there is a language barrier. A number of regions have done work to make GMB materials accessible in different languages, including in Yorkshire region where migrant workers have recruited over 100 members through their specific migrant workers branch and Polish language campaigning. The region are currently working to increase the capacity of migrant workers reps so that further outreach, recruitment and workplace campaigning can take place.

### **Dying to Work**

Dying to work has become a flagship TUC campaign on the back of work by GMB Midland and East Coast region. Over 600,000 working people are now covered by the dying to work agreement which helps support workers diagnosed with a terminal illness.

More at: <https://www.dyingtowork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Example-Charter.pdf>

### **LGBT+ organising**

You are more likely to be bullied or harassed at work if you are LGBTQIA+. GMB can show that we are on the side of equality by promoting workplace policies to end discrimination, bullying and harassment in the LGBT+ community. Steps taken in some workplaces, include LGBT+ equality champions and mandatory training for managers which GMB should promote as best practice. London Region piloted a course on tackling workplace discrimination for LGBT+ workers, holding a summit to promote action in workplaces across the region.