

BECOMING A BRANCH LGBT+ OFFICER IN UNISON

Self-organisation brings together members from certain under-represented groups – women members, Black members, disabled members and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) members.

The purpose of self-organisation is to assist the union to:

1. Promote the union's equalities and bargaining agenda
2. Defend jobs, terms and conditions and services
3. Build its density and have a strong and dynamic presence in the workplace.

Working within UNISON's agreed policies, self-organised groups have the right to:

- Meet to share concerns and aspirations and establish their own priorities
- Elect their own representatives
- Have adequate and agreed funding and other resources
- Work within a flexible structure to build confidence and encourage participation.

There are lots of resources to support self-organisation, including UNISON guidelines on how it works: 'Organising for equality' stock no 1577 or www.unison.org.uk/equality. There is a host of LGBT+ specific resources at www.unison.org.uk/out. Sign up to receive the LGBT+ e-bulletin and Out in UNISON.

Where there is a recognised branch LGBT+ group, the group can elect a representative to the branch committee. Whether or not there is a currently a functioning LGBT+ group, many branches create the post of branch LGBT+ officer to provide a point of contact for LGBT+ issues and members within the branch.

The information below was put together by participants at national training events for branch LGBT+ officers and contacts. The training is available to regions. It will next run nationally in Spring 2020.

Key tasks of branch LGBT officer

Together with any branch LGBT+ group:

- Being out and visible
- Championing UNISON's commitment to LGBT+ equality
- Encouraging LGBT+ workers to join UNISON
- Keeping LGBT+ members informed and getting them involved
- Organising branch LGBT+ meetings and events eg LGBT+ History Month
- Being the two-way link between LGBT+ members and the branch committee
- Representing the views of branch LGBT+ members
- Sharing regional and national UNISON LGBT+ information in the branch
- Infiltrating and collaborating with any employer staff LGBT+ network
- Building and improving links with local LGBT+ community groups and prides

- If possible, participating in the regional LGBT+ group
- If possible, organising branch participation in the annual national LGBT+ conference
- Reporting on LGBT+ work at the branch AGM.

Essential knowledge

- Where to get information, advice, resources and support
- The issues your members are concerned about and interested in

Important skills and qualities

- A passion for trade unionism and LGBT+ equality
- Sense of humour
- Good listener
- Understanding and life experience
- Common sense
- Open minded / non judgemental
- Good communicator
- Time management skills / knowing your limits
- Resourcefulness
- Approachability
- Understanding of and commitment to confidentiality
- Willingness to learn
- Determination

Key contacts / support

- Branch secretary
- Branch equalities co-ordinator
- Other self-organised groups/SOG officers such as Black members officer, women's officer
- Workplace equality reps
- Accredited stewards
- Regional LGBT+ group and its contact officer
- National LGBT+ committee and its officers (Carola and Susan)
- LGBT+ activists in other local branches – for possible joint organising
- Local pride and LGBT+ community groups
- Your members!

For more information on any of this, contact your regional LGBT+ group – details on the UNISON website.

Contact the national LGBT+ group via out@unison.co.uk

Or

Laura Webster SE Regional LGBT+ Officer – l.webster@unison.co.uk