

A photograph of three diverse women sitting at a desk in an office. The woman in the foreground has curly hair and is wearing a leopard print jacket over a white top, looking down at a document. The woman in the middle has short dark hair and is wearing a black leather jacket, looking towards the right. The woman in the background has long dark hair and is wearing a black jacket, looking at a laptop. The desk is cluttered with papers, a laptop, and a small potted plant. The background is a brick wall with a large green plant.

Wales  
**TUC**  
Cymru

**10 steps towards  
LGBTQ+ inclusive  
workplaces**

# Introduction from Phil Jones Chair of Wales TUC LGBTQ+ forum



As Trade Unionists we understand that being treated fairly in work is crucial, but as a member of the LGBTQ+ community that has not always been guaranteed. Workplaces haven't always been a place where our safety is guaranteed.

Whilst law, society and public opinions have changed for the better for a lot for LGBTQ+ people, there are still too many places where hatred hides in plain sight. For our trans colleagues especially, the likelihood of even being able to work is lower and the chance of being discriminated against, or experiencing hate speech at work, in public or online is much higher.

We want to see improvements in how LGBTQ+ people access healthcare, housing, education, workplaces and community spaces in safety. We want to make sure that our human rights record in Wales shows us to be a safe, welcoming, and inclusive place to live and work. Everyone should be allowed to be their true selves, and we all should be able to live in

safety in communities that strive for the best for all its members.

As a Trade Union movement, we have spoken to government, participated in the LGBTQ+ consultations, we've informed policies, we have made many changes and plans. But we know that the changes we want, can only happen with hard work and dedication of Trade Union members. I look forward to working with you to make the changes that are still needed to give us the safest, most inclusive workplaces in the world.

### **The Equality Act**

The Equality Act 2010 is a law that is supposed to protect workers from unfair treatment due to age, sex, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and a number of other characteristics. Employers can also combat discrimination by establishing strong equal opportunities policies and practices.

### **Using the term LGBTQ+**

We recognise that sexuality and gender expression can be fluid and can change over a lifetime, or in different environments with different groups of people.

We also recognise that many people will chose to define their own identity in terms that suit them best. We support this strongly, but we also feel that many people have found strength in the collective umbrella term of LGBTQ+ and we would like to support this.

However, despite our aim of being as inclusive as possible, we also recognise that some people will not find their identity immediately apparent in this this acronym. We have decided to use this acronym so that we use the same terminology that the Welsh Government uses. We hope that by doing this, we will ensure the most widely understood terminology

**As the Welsh Government looks to deliver the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, trade unions are at the forefront of making sure that workplaces deliver decent quality, fair work for Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and Queer workers. This means good, safe workplaces, where:**

- Voices of LGBTQ+ workers are respected, listened to, and acted upon
- Pay is fair, collectively bargained and rises with relation to inflation
- Identity is respected
- Terms and conditions are favourable to workers, do not discriminate disproportionately and do not rely on zero hour or gig economy conditions
- Progression, development, and learning is factored into the worker experience so that all workers can experience this and grow within a workplace.

We have developed a 10-point action plan, that Trade Union reps can implement in workplaces across Wales to make real practical changes.

## **1. Incorporate gender neutral language**

Gender stereotypes can be harmful for all workers. Many work sectors such as education, health, construction, and catering can often have a very gendered workforce, which makes it less welcoming for people of other genders to join. By incorporating gender neutral or additive language, it makes workplaces more inclusive to all workers, patients and clients.

### **Checklist**

- Ask if workers receive training on inclusive language? For example, greetings such as 'hey guys' imply a gender, while inclusive language such as 'hey everyone' does not. Many workers may never have

considered this, and training may help them understand how they can be more inclusive in their everyday language.



- ☑ Ensure that if a worker wears a name badge that they can use the name of their choice and include their pronouns.
- ☑ When job roles are traditionally gendered (for example, dinner lady or bin man) consider using different language so that jobs can appeal to the widest group of applicants (for example lunchtime assistants or refuse collectors).

## 2. Make it comfortable for workers to highlight their pronouns at work

By allowing workers to express their pronouns, it makes it an easier conversation for trans and non binary workers to express their pronouns.

Some languages may not have an established gender-neutral pronoun. In this case, you can simply ask the person how they would like to be referred to. Words used as gender neutral pronouns may exist, but not be common in usage. For example, some Welsh speakers may use the word 'nhw' as a gender-neutral pronoun. Seek to educate yourself on the language of the communities you are working with.

*Cited from A beginner's guide to pronouns and using pronouns in the workplace, by Stonewall*

### Checklist

- ☑ Check if your workplace has any guidance on being inclusive and using pronouns at work?



- ☑ If you are an ally, adding your pronouns to your work shows solidarity and normalises the expression of pronouns in everyday language.
- ☑ You may wish to encourage (but not require) workers to include pronouns in their email signature or name at work to foster a culture of inclusivity.
- ☑ If a worker insists on repeatedly

If anyone feels they are being targeted in the workplace because of any protected characteristic, then this can be considered as unlawful harassment.

misgendering or intentionally using incorrect pronouns, ensure that your workplace understands what actions are appropriate, and takes this action.

### 3. Support workers who are transitioning

Trans people's experiences are diverse. However, many trans, intersex and gender non-conforming people report persistent transphobia, negative treatment, and aggression whilst in or searching for work.

Workplaces need to take preventative action to stop





transphobia being allowed to take place. This means taking positive action within the workplace to help create a welcoming and inclusive culture whether you have any identified trans staff or not. This can include creating a culture which allows LGBTQ+ people in your organisation to tell you what can be improved on.

It's crucial that if you receive reports of transphobia such as harassment, discrimination or unfair treatment towards a trans worker, that you act quickly to resolve it.

### **Checklist**

- ☑ Ensure that your workplace has included gender identity

and gender reassignment in equal opportunities and HR policies. This should include fair recruitment and selection processes.

- ☑ Check other policies and procedures – such as recruitment policies, record-keeping and dress codes – to make sure that they do not discriminate against trans people.
- ☑ If your workplace has dress codes, ensure that workers are allowed to wear the clothes that align to their gender identity. If there is no dress code, you can proactively state that workers should feel comfortable to express their gender in whatever way feels comfortable to them.
- ☑ Provide workers undergoing gender reassignment with paid leave from work for any medical appointments or procedures as appropriate.

- ☑ Ensure that the workplace has gender neutral welfare facilities such as toilets and changing areas.
- ☑ Make it clear that anti-trans behaviour or comments are unacceptable in the workplace.
- ☑ Negotiate specific policies to support employees who transition.
- ☑ Support trans members experiencing problems at work, especially during transition and maybe locate external support networks to signpost to, if assistance is not currently available within the workplace.
- ☑ Ensure there are robust systems in place to ensure a person's trans status is kept confidential and that all personal records are swiftly updated should they change their gender. Records referring to a person's previous identity should be destroyed unless there is a very good reason for keeping them.

## 4. Consider your workplace policies

Workplace policies are useful to have to support workers and they can make a huge contribution to cultural changes that need to happen to make work fairer. If your workplace is developing new policies then it should be discussed with workers, and it should be revisited periodically to ensure that it still suits the needs of workers. For workplace policies that particularly affect different groups of workers, such as LGBTQ+ workers, it is important that their voice is central to what is in the workplace policy, and they have many opportunities to contribute.

### Checklist

- ☑ Create a workplace agreement setting out how workers who experience homophobia, biphobia, transphobia or discrimination from colleagues, customers or clients may access support and incorporate a zero tolerance to hate approach.





- ✔️ LGBTQ+ people who are undergoing fertility treatment or who would like to grow their family may want to find out information discreetly. Ensure that information about parental and adoption leave is available easily and is accessible to all workers, such as the intranet.
- ✔️ It is important to check that any employer pension scheme offers equal pension survivor benefits to same sex partners.
- ✔️ Encourage employers to bring relevant policies to life as part of

induction training to create an inclusive environment.

## 5. Training and progression

Progression may be an issue within your workplace for LGBTQ+ people. We all arrive at work as complex human beings with different issues that we face in life. LGBTQ+ people are more likely to face hatred in the forms of transphobia, homophobia, bi-phobia or other forms of hatred and discrimination. This can impact on work, and it could mean



that they require extra support. Training and creating opportunities for progression can be hugely helpful and create a more understanding and progressive workplace.

### Checklist

- ☑ Negotiate that your workplace delivers training to all members of staff
- ☑ It's important that union members have facility time to attend training from their Trade Unions on equality. In Wales, workers in devolved public bodies have the right to facility time, join the Wales TUC campaign to ensure that this applies to all workers.
- ☑ Ensure that staff and line managers receive training in LGBTQ+ equality and provide

information about the issues, including around harassment and abuse.

- ☑ Provide training to ensure that staff and managers are aware of their own potential unconscious bias.
- ☑ Conduct regular monitoring exercises looking at how long LGBTQ+ workers have worked in their positions for, the numbers of different LGBTQ+ workers at different grades/pay bands, and pay gap monitoring.
- ☑ Supporting visible LGBTQ+ role models or creating opportunities for peer-to-peer support can be a helpful way of encouraging workers to find support in their working lives and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

## 6. Don't underestimate the power of negotiation

Small changes can make a big difference. At the TUC we believe that the UK Government should introduce a statutory requirement for large employers to report on their LGBTQ+ pay gap – in the same way they do their gender pay gaps – with action plans detailing how bosses will address those inequalities. We can all play our part in negotiating a better and more inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ people.

### Checklist

- ❑ Some workers may have additional fears about their safety, especially if leaving work late or arriving early. Negotiating changes that ensure workplaces consider the impact of shift patterns or how workers get home safe will help protect all workers and ensure that an employer meets their duty of care.
- ❑ Unions have been campaigning for improvements to late night and off-peak transport service provisions as well as the lowering of fares and opposing cuts to public transport. Join these campaigns and lobby elected officials to ensure that all workers, especially LGBTQ+ workers feel safer when returning home after work.
- ❑ Employers can improve their recruitment practices by advertising in spaces which are aimed at LGBTQ+ people, making sure that inclusive workplace policies are in place, using gender neutral language in recruitment messaging, training and being proactive in searching for LGBTQ+ talent. As a union rep, you should feel able to hold them to account for this work and negotiate improved recruitment practices.
- ❑ Survey and map your colleagues. Ensure that your LGBTQ+ colleagues feel safe to highlight any issues that they are facing, then anonymise

their data and use this to guide changes that need to be negotiated with management. Always make LGBTQ+ colleagues feel safe by ensuring anonymity of their data.

## 7. Anti-bullying practices

The TUC believes that a step change in how we support LGBTQ+ people at work is long overdue. **We all deserve respect at work, whatever our sexual orientation or gender identity. But, while LGBTQ+ communities have seen lots of positive change in recent years, too many still don't feel safe and comfortable at work.**

LGBTQ+ workers have the same rights and protections as everyone else and shouldn't face discrimination or harassment.

It's not good enough for bosses to dismiss homophobia or transphobia as "workplace banter". That defence has been tested in employment tribunals, and it failed.

Usually if a person genuinely feels they are being singled out for unfair treatment by a boss or colleague they are probably being bullied, and there is certainly an issue that needs to be addressed. Although there is no comprehensive list of bullying behaviours, and there is no one type of person who is likely to be a bully, the list below should give an idea of some of the behaviours which constitute workplace bullying.

Bullying behaviour can include any of the following behaviours, as well as others not listed below:

- Someone being constantly criticised, having responsibilities removed or being given trivial tasks to do
- Staff being shouted at
- A person being persistently picked on in front of others, or in private
- Having promotion blocked

- Regularly making the same person the butt of jokes
- Constantly attacking a member of staff in terms of their professional or personal standing
- Setting a person up to fail by overloading them with work or setting impossible deadlines
- Regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding individuals from discussions or activities
- Spreading malicious rumours or private or embarrassing information
- Staff having their views and opinions ignored or demeaned.

Bullying does not have to be face to face and can include “cyber-bullying” which includes information being spread through email or social media or on internet forums.

## Checklist

There are a number of positive steps that union representatives can take to raise awareness and tackle bullying in the workplace.

- Use posters and leaflets to raise the issue of bullying with members and take the opportunity of discussing bullying with them to see if they think that there are any problems. Safety representatives should report their concerns and those of their members to management.
- Safety representatives can use their routine inspections, or undertake special inspections to speak to members about bullying at work.
- One of the best ways of assessing the scale of bullying within the workplace is to survey members. This can gather evidence on the scale and extent of bullying in the workplace and can either be done by the union or jointly

with management. Any survey must be strictly confidential, but it is important that staff receive information on the overall findings from the survey. The results from any survey can help employers develop a policy on dealing with bullying and can also be of use in trying to change the behaviour of individual managers and staff.

## **8. Set up a staff union backed LGBTQ+ group or network.**

Workplace affinity groups can be a great place for people with a shared identity to find support, solidarity and friendship. They can help to find out how workers are treated within the organisation and if they are dealing with any workplace issues.



Any workplace affinity group needs to be supported by Trade Unions otherwise it can quickly become a space where problems are highlighted but nobody has the power to improve conditions, leaving workers in precarious positions with no meaningful help or support.

## Checklist

**Step 1:** Talking to the workers who have been affected by discrimination

- What are LGBTQ+ workers experiences of discrimination?
- What do they know about the equal opportunities policies at their place of work?
- Do they feel as though their policies are working?
- What does monitoring information reveal?

**Step 2:** Create a course of action before approaching management

- What are the key issues that need to be tackled?
- Is discrimination taking place at the recruitment stage?
- Or is there an issue with certain groups of workers not being promoted or having access to in-work progression opportunities?

**Step 3:** Start thinking about viable solutions and how you can gain support from the majority of your union members.

For instance, would a workplace campaign be the most effective way to raise awareness of the issue?

**Step 4:** Think about how management might respond.

Consider the potential outcomes and how this determines the next actions your group would need to take.

**Step 5:** Clarify the exact objectives you are hoping to achieve.





You should have this ready before you approach management. When approaching management, it is also particularly important that the voices of LGBTQ+ workers are represented. And of course, you need to ensure that any agreement you reach with your employer benefits all union members equally.

## 9. Remember the past by honouring the future

Many workplaces will outwardly celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month without taking actions to support their own workers. This is not acceptable and workplaces which are only taking performative actions without improving the culture and conditions for workers, need to be called out. Work with your employer to make sure that they don't just pay lip service and that they follow up any celebrations with meaningful action for the benefit of LGBTQ+ people.

### Checklist

- This can be a great time to launch a resource or get employers engaged, but inclusion is something that should happen every day. Is your employer taking actions throughout the year?
- Is this work action orientated and being revisited regularly?
- Has any work on LGBTQ+ issues been created in partnership with LGBTQ+ people?
- Are you providing support opportunities for LGBTQ+ workers within your own organisation and creating meaningful internal change too?



## 10. Build a strong union.

Your actions are important, and they rely on having a well organised workplace. Ensure that your union is taking steps to see LGBTQ+ people represented at every level.

### Checklist

- Campaign for union recognition.
- Make sure that your union membership is inclusive and reach out to workers who haven't yet joined.
- Hold regular union meetings so that everyone has a chance to speak about their issues.
- Train reps or work with the Wales TUC to make sure reps attend training sessions.
- Engage with workers.
- Schedule regular meetings with management and engage in collective bargaining opportunities.
- Show solidarity with other workers from other unions.
- Celebrate your successes as a union.
- Provide opportunities for recovery. Activism is important, but so is rest.

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