

## Prouder than ever to be in UNISON

We love our union. As you read through this issue of Out in UNISON, you hear from a few members about what UNISON means to them. Their stories – while each unique – are replicated in workplaces all over the UK and in every type of public service job, across our diverse LGBT membership.

Yet trade unions are vilified by the Tory government and under attack as never before. If you listen to the Tory education secretary, it's the unions that are responsible for everything that's wrong with schools. She says unions are 'talking down the profession', saying that's why teachers are leaving in droves. The teachers themselves are clear that it's the forced changes to their jobs from central government and now the attempt to force all schools to become academies that's the problem.

Then there's the junior doctors – on strike over proposed changes to their contracts that they believe put patients at risk. The Tory health secretary accuses their union the BMA of lying to them about what the changes mean. Well we know junior doctors are tired, but are they really that gullible?

Meanwhile the Tory Trade Union Bill continues its parliamentary progress, due to return to the Commons this spring, when it could pass into law in England, Scotland and Wales.

We have won a number of victories in the Lords, on electronic voting, our political funds and facility time. We have also won a huge amount of support from employers and the Welsh and Scottish governments. Details of all this are on the trade union bill campaign pages of the UNISON website. We now need to turn up the pressure.

We need to show MPs why we are proud to be in UNISON and why they are so wrong about trade unions.

We urge you to:

- sign up for campaign updates at [unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/trade-union-bill-2015](http://unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/trade-union-bill-2015)

- while you are there, fill in the online survey on how you tackle discrimination and promote equality as a UNISON activist and take the facility time survey
- tell your MP what's wrong with the trade union bill – and why you are proud to be in UNISON.
- UNISON has commissioned NatCen Social Research to revisit our 2013 research into the implications of cuts for LGBT people and services. An online survey will investigate what has happened in the past three years. Survey launches in May – make sure you are signed up to our monthly LGBT e-bulletin for the launch at [unison.org.uk/out](http://unison.org.uk/out). Our thanks to UNISON's general political fund for funding this.

# Supporting those who care for us

Andi Grief-Page has recently taken up the role of UNISON representative on the national LGBT ambulance network. The network aims to provide a positive working environment for LGBT ambulance staff and improve patient care for LGBT communities. Andi works for the South Western Ambulance Trust in the 111 West Hub as a call advisor. He plans to go on the road as an emergency care assistant later in the year. He is his branch equality and diversity officer.

Andi says 'Equality and diversity is a big thing for me. I was bullied when younger, both in and out of school. I was even put in hospital a couple of times. Later in life, I was pushed to one side because I'm gay – when I first came out it wasn't as accepted as it is now. I worked hard and kept my head down till a friend came to me one day telling me he was feeling suicidal because he was being bullied. That was it for me – I wanted to do more for the equality and diversity of people around me.'

Andi joined UNISON in 2013, when he was working in the private care sector. He wanted to know UNISON was there if he needed help or advice. Now in the ambulance service, he is even more aware of the pressure staff can be under. He welcomes UNISON's support for the Blue Light mental health support scheme for emergency service staff, organised by the mental health charity Mind and endorsed by the emergency services.

He said: 'This is a great initiative. Mental health is a silent killer and not enough is done for emergency service staff. They deal with life

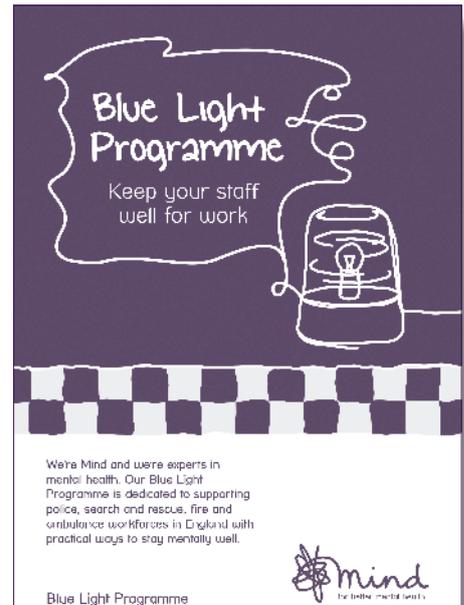
threatening calls every day. People just see them dealing with this but don't see the effects these calls have on the staff after they have left the scene.'

UNISON's pledge as part of the Blue Light scheme is to challenge the stigma around mental health, publicise support and track progress on wellbeing initiatives.

Andi urges anyone facing stress inside or outside work, whether from pressure of workloads, bullying, domestic abuse – whatever it may be – to remember you are not alone. There is support there.

**Find out more about the Blue Light scheme at [mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/bluelight](http://mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/bluelight)**

**For information on mental health and wellbeing wherever you work, [mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/lgbt-mental-health](http://mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/lgbt-mental-health)**



**The theme for this year's IDAHOBiT** (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) is mental health and wellbeing. IDAHOBiT is marked on 17 May. There is information from around the world at [dayagainsthomophobia.org](http://dayagainsthomophobia.org). Lots of branches and workplaces organise local events – send details of yours to [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk) and we will help publicise them.



# Getting LGBT members in and organised

Every year at LGBT conference, we celebrate the best LGBT recruitment and organising initiatives. The awards go from strength to strength and in 2015 we introduced the first award for a photograph that can be used for recruitment.

UNISON's president Wendy Nichols presented the awards, saying how impressed the presidential team was with the number and range of events that UNISON LGBT groups attend each year.

The inaugural photographic award was won by the Lewes branch group, with the photo on page 4. It really sums up the fun and energy of pride.

There were three runners up in 2015. Camden branch, the bisexual members caucus and South West region. The bisexual caucus has continued to raise their profile in UNISON and raise UNISON's profile in the bi community. The South West region continues to trail blaze, working with other self organised groups in the region, increasing the number and variety

of events they attend. This has led directly to recruiting members from under-represented groups. Camden branch overhauled their LGBT group and doubled its membership over the year. There is now never a branch newsletter or e-bulletin that doesn't have a LGBT article in it.

The 2015 winners were the North West regional group – the first region to win the award two years running. The group continues to grow, and has worked hard to develop caucus participation, actively supported BUFF, the main annual event for trans men. They have strengthened links into the LGBT community and have also won awards from Manchester and Bolton prides.

**Huge thanks to UNISON's affinity suppliers for their continued support for the LGBT recruitment awards and donation of prizes.**



# Attending pride for UNISON – a few helpful hints

You've been asked to run a stall at your local pride, but you aren't sure what you need to take with you. Out In UNISON has spoken to some pride regulars and here are their top tips:

- Volunteers – not sitting behind a table, but out front talking to people, visibly UNISON
- A big smile
- Practical essentials (a range of views on this, but ideas include kettle, toilet roll, waterproofs, sun screen, folding chairs, refreshments of various kinds...)
- Membership application forms
- UNISON tablecloth/flag plus rainbow flag or decorations
- Information on how to get involved as an LGBT member
- Simple engaging activity, preferably topical and visible. Post-its and display boards
- Selection of UNISON materials including our main LGBT/bi/trans recruitment leaflets and network meeting cards
- ILGA maps
- Under the table: file copies of wide range of UNISON advice for reference
- Pens and paper
- String, sellotape, scissors, blutac, big bulldog clips and – if windy – lengths of knicker elastic and drawing pins (email [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk) for advice on how to use!)
- Petty cash for emergencies

## And if you have access to them:

- Brightly coloured goody bags, pre-filled with UNISON materials
- Gazebo
- Sail flags
- Laptops or tablets and mobile broadband, to take people onto the UNISON website and sign them up (or update their membership data)

For details of UNISON LGBT resources, go to [unison.org.uk/out](http://unison.org.uk/out) and scroll through the four pages of resources.



# What are you doing for your Bi members?

By **Jade-Su Armstrong** and **Natalie Roberts**, bi caucus convenors

Spring is in the air and it's time to get organising. We had a successful year last year, with a record number of members attending the bi members' meeting at LGBT conference. This year we have a number of events that we would love to see as many bi members attending as possible.

## Bi members national network day – 15 July 2016

This is open to all bi members in the union. It's a half day meeting at UNISON centre in London, where we have a chat about any issues you may be facing as a bi member. We will also be looking at what motions on bi equality to put to LGBT conference this November. There's no cost to attend and you don't have to be out in your branch. Travel costs are met nationally.

## BiCon – 5-7 August

BiCon is a weekend-long educational and social gathering for bi people, their friends, partners, and others with a supportive interest in bisexuality. Representatives of UNISON's bi network will run a workshop on employment issues for bi people. This year it's in Preston at the University of Lancashire.

[2016.bicon.org.uk](http://2016.bicon.org.uk)

## Bi Visibility Day – 23 September

This is a yearly event where we celebrate being bi. To see what we did last year, there are photos on the UNISON LGBT Facebook page. We'll be discussing ideas for what to do this year at our network meeting in July.

[bivisibilityday.com](http://bivisibilityday.com)

If you are running any events during the year, we would love to hear about it. We have bi recruitment leaflets, bi workplace equality factsheets and various promotional materials. Please get in touch if you would like some!

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

National LGBT committee member and bi activist Asha will be featured in Bi Community News in the next month or so. She is being interviewed for all her work in the bi community and for UNISON, so keep an eye out for that.

[bicommunitynews.co.uk](http://bicommunitynews.co.uk)



## What is BiCon?

BiCon is the highlight of the bisexual community year (at least in the UK!). It has been running in various forms since 1984 and in recent years attracts between 200 and 400 people. It has been a residential event since 1989 and evolved over time to meet the changing needs of the community. It has also spawned offshoots such as local Bi fests (one day or one off events in a particular locality) and BiReCon – usually added onto BiCon, with a more academic/research focus.

Sessions are run by volunteer attendees and will depend on that year's intake. So they will range from sessions run by Stonewall and UNISON to clothes swaps and bat walks. There is now a Ltd company set up to protect the money and allow each year's team to put deposits down for venues before tickets go on sale! There is a big a focus from the organisers on ensuring that as many people can attend as possible. These include a sliding scale for ticket prices and an equality fund that helps be offset some of the costs of attending, such as childcare or travel.

# Count us in

By Becky Evans, Ymlaen branch and LGBT delegate to 2016 UNISON Community conference

I joined UNISON because of the LGBT self organised group. Coming from rural Wales this was the only place I felt that I could be me. Travelling to Cardiff for meetings for my gay days was amazing! It was this group alone that gave me the strength and desire to come out in my workplace, family and community. Today, I am happily married to my wonderful wife with our families happily involved in our lives and live in an inclusive environment.

I understand that not everyone wants to be out at work. Not being out is a well-established way to try and avoid discrimination. It doesn't always work, but many people feel it is still worth trying and people do have the right to keep this private. But it DOESN'T mean that LGBT people should not be counted or that we shouldn't have LGBT organising drives or bargain for LGBT equality. Because this can be life changing and in some cases life saving.

It is increasingly common for community groups to monitor their staff and their service users, including asking questions about their sexual orientation and gender identity or gender history. Our UNISON LGBT group has taken a cautious approach to this in the past. We felt that it was more important to focus on policy and practice than numbers. But times have changed and now the LGBT group wants UNISON to do more.

Our motion to community conference – and a similar motion to this summer's national delegate conference – draws attention to

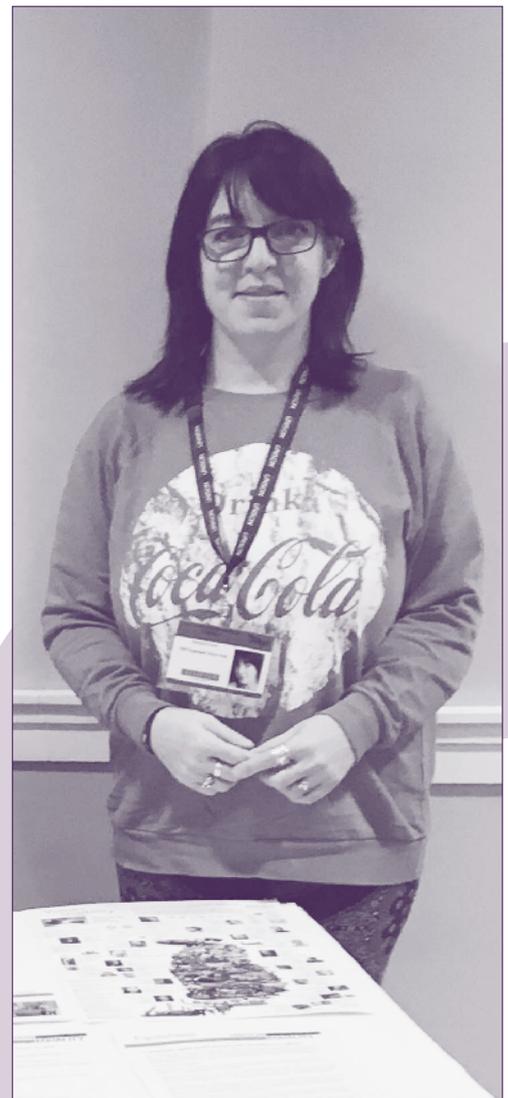
the fact that you can now add LGBT monitoring data to the personal details section of your online UNISON membership record. This has the highest level of confidentiality and only non-identifying reports will be generated. Your branch secretary can no more see what you record as your sexual orientation than look into your bank account.

So we are urging all members to complete their own details and encourage everyone in their branch to do the same. It's a great way to encourage people to update other membership details as well. It's crucial we have accurate membership details given the Tory attacks of the Trade Union Bill, which seeks to decimate our membership and strength.

The other side to this is what employers are doing on LGBT monitoring. In my branch we are looking closely at this. To know what best practice looks like, read UNISON's LGBT workforce monitoring factsheet. It's online in both the LGBT section and knowledge section of UNISON's website. The LGBT section is easy to find – just go to **unison.org.uk/out** and it's in the resources section. As the factsheet points out, monitoring like this is only worth doing if it is part of other work to stop discrimination and promote equality. Have a look at what your employer's policies say on LGBT equality and asked when they were last reviewed.

Organising LGBT members, getting LGBT equality on the bargaining agenda and holding employers

accountable can be challenging but it's such a worthwhile task. As branch LGBT officer I can reach out to members and offer them the same support I have received in the past. Join with me – you really could be changing people's lives.



# A rainbow over the Isle of Man

The Isle of Man is as amazing place. Along with Ayers Rock and Mount Kenya, it has just been identified by Unesco as one of 20 best places in the world to explore nature.

It was also the last part of the UK to decriminalise homosexuality in 1992 – ten years later than Northern Ireland. It was here that lesbian and gay activists in our former partner union NALGO organised the union's first march for lesbian and gay rights. This was in 1983, when NALGO's annual conference took place on the island. 300 delegates carrying banners and balloons marched along the promenade and through the main shopping centre to the government building to deliver a petition calling for decriminalisation. It was a milestone in the development of our LGBT group.

And now the island is breaking new ground, as it moves to introduce same sex marriage. The Chief Minister Alan Bell has pledged to see the change though, to demonstrate that the Isle of Man is an inclusive, open society. Chief Minister Bell has openly been in a relationship with another man for over 20 years.

As ever, UNISON is at the heart of the change. Sam Hudson, UNISON branch secretary and equalities officer for the Isle of Man branch has been leading UNISON's response to the consultation on the Bill and lobbying members of the House of Keys and the Legislative Council, the island's upper chamber. Sam is also a Director of the local LGBT charity Manx Rainbow Association.

Important amendments have been won and overturned. Activists have won an amendment to extend civil partnership to same sex couples, which would be a first for any part

of the UK. They have managed to stop proposed amendments that would have given registrars the right to refuse to carry out same sex marriages and teachers the right to refuse to teach about it, on religious grounds. Unlike other UK same sex marriage laws, which are stand-alone Acts, this Bill amends the existing Marriage Act. It could end up as the most egalitarian marriage law in the UK.

Speaking to Out in UNISON Sam Hudson said 'The positive reception to this bill is a landmark in the Island's LGBT history. Early concerns about opposition were very much exaggerated in the media. The state has demonstrated an understanding of the importance of equality and the needs of the community compared to the bad old days of the 90s when police witch-hunts against men having sex with men led to suicides.

It has also shown the importance of bringing LGBT people and politicians together – few of the politicians were aware of the

discriminatory nature of opt-outs for registrars and unsure of the need to open up civil partnerships to heterosexual people. UNISON's consultation response was certainly the most comprehensive and informative response submitted to the Isle of Man Government.

I got involved with UNISON out of my interest in helping others, recognising UNISON's record of campaigning for working-class people. There are many aspects of Island life that need to change for LGBT people, including legislation and support services. Because of my interest in mainstream and queer LGBT politics, I also joined the Manx Rainbow Association to address these issues.

I would encourage all LGBT people to get involved to support their community, whether that be through political activism or just offering your own thoughts to activists or LGBT organisations. There is still much work to do and people depend on your input.'



# Did you know?

A new occasional series of important but less well-known UNISON LGBT info

## You have equal rights at work as an LGBT parent.

Statutory workplace rights include paid time off when a child is born or adopted and unpaid parental leave and dependent care leave (to deal with an emergency). With many employers, UNISON has negotiated above the legal minimum – for example paid parental and dependent leave. Whether it's rights you are entitled to by law or rights that have been negotiated, you cannot be treated less favourably because you are LGBT.

Workplace parenting rights are based on a social view of family, not restricted to biological or legally recognised relationships. What matters is whether you have responsibility for that child. Parenting rights are based on the assumption that a child will have a maximum of two parents. But the possibility of more – for example a same sex couple and an involved donor parent – is not ruled out.

For children born or adopted on or after 5 April 2015, parents have the right to 'shared parental leave'. This allows the parent entitled to maternity or adoption leave to transfer part of that leave – and the right to pay that comes with it – to another parent. The purpose is to give parents more flexibility in sharing care of a child during the first year. Again, the assumption is that there are only two parents, but this is not set out in the law and it is difficult to think of a good reason why it could not be shared between three parents.



**The first ever intersex equality and human rights parliamentary reception** took place in the Scottish Parliament on 17 March. This was part of an Equality Network Forum to promote awareness and understanding and develop a strategy and plan of action for Scotland on intersex equality. UNISON was represented by national LGBT committee member Kaz Williams, pictured here with Margaret McCulloch MSP, who hosted the reception. Ruth Baldacchino, co-secretary general of ILGA, the international LGBTI association to which UNISON is affiliated, was a key speaker at the event.



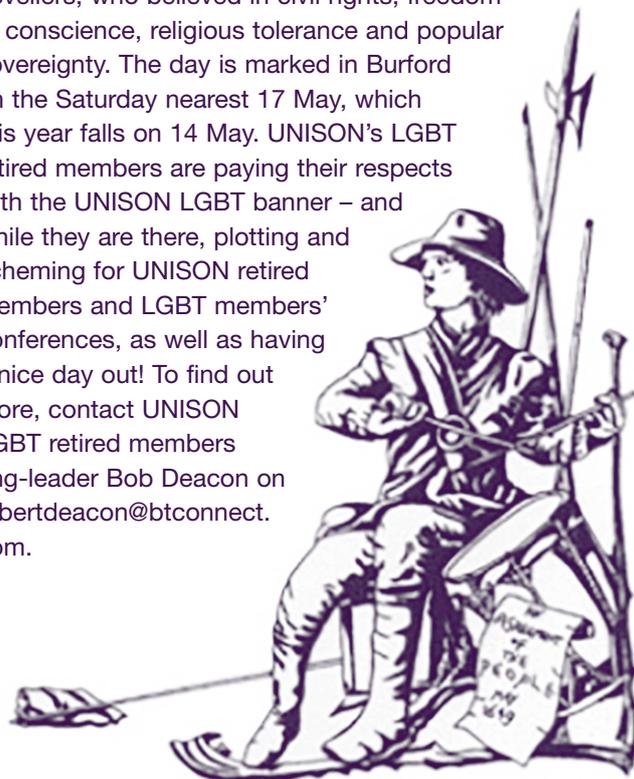
**The fourth annual training for branch LGBT officers** took place in Newcastle on 10 February, meaning over 100 branch officers are now trained and out there organising for LGBT equality. Highlights mentioned by participants in the feedback on the day included 'Now I have an action plan in my head for when I return to the branch'; 'very useful'; 'session on transgender equality really insightful'; 'very interesting and worthwhile – I had no idea where to start before'; 'friendly open discussion'. The training will run again in February 2017 – details will be in Out in UNISON and the monthly LGBT e-bulletin.



**UNISON has nominated Asha Wolfe-Robinson and Dettie Gould** to the TUC LGBT committee for 2016-17. Elections take place at TUC LGBT conference in the summer. We are quietly confident they will be successful. They are both already well-respected members of the committee.

**UNISON defines bisexual people** as those who feel attraction to more than one gender. A more traditional definition is 'attraction to people of the same sex and the opposite sex'. The UNISON definition recognises that binary ideas of gender are too limiting. Talk of 'same' and 'opposite' sex, or assuming that everyone identifies solely as a man or solely as a woman, reinforces gender stereotypes and segregation. It excludes people who understand their own gender in a different way. It seeks to limit us all into traditional gender roles.

**Levellers' day** commemorates the execution of three soldiers on 17 May 1649, on Oliver Cromwell's orders, in Burford churchyard, Oxfordshire. They were leaders of a revolutionary movement known as the Levellers, who believed in civil rights, freedom of conscience, religious tolerance and popular sovereignty. The day is marked in Burford on the Saturday nearest 17 May, which this year falls on 14 May. UNISON's LGBT retired members are paying their respects with the UNISON LGBT banner – and while they are there, plotting and scheming for UNISON retired members and LGBT members' conferences, as well as having a nice day out! To find out more, contact UNISON LGBT retired members ring-leader Bob Deacon on [robertdeacon@btconnect.com](mailto:robertdeacon@btconnect.com).



**We are looking for a cluster of branch LGBT groups** to act as a pilot, to identify good practice in LGBT organising on a city-wide or sub-regional basis. This was a recommendation from our last LGBT conference. This type of organising is flagged in the UNISON guidance on self-organisation *Organising for Equality*, and can be a great way forward where individual branches struggle to find critical LGBT mass. Interested? Contact [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk)

**UNISON uses the social model of disability.** The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. It's a definition that has grown out of the disability rights movement. It is a critique of the medical model, which sees disabled people as the problem. It challenges us all to remove the barriers in how we think, talk, act and organise workplaces, union activities and society.

# Why the 5 May elections matter – use your vote!

On 5 May, lots of us will be going to the ballot box. There are elections for the Northern Ireland Assembly, National Assembly for Wales and Scottish Parliament. Then there's the London Assembly, English local government, mayoral elections and elections for Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales. Some UNISON activists don't just vote – they stand for election too. Out in UNISON meets a couple of them from Manchester.



**Cllr Bev Craig**

Growing up in Northern Ireland I didn't have many positive experiences of politics and it wasn't until I became more involved in UNISON that I joined the Labour Party in 2009.

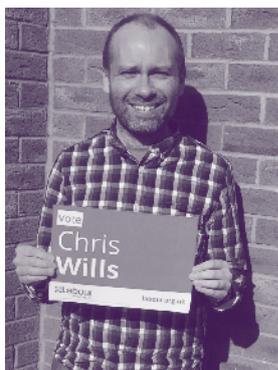
I've been an LGBT activist since my teens involved in local, national and international organisations, and witnessing the changes the Labour Government brought for LGBT people. I initially got involved in LGBT Labour. I sat on the national committee from 2009, becoming national co-chair from 2013-2015 during the general election.

The average age nationally of a

councillor is 59, and I didn't see many young, gay women from working class backgrounds active in party politics. I first got elected as Manchester councillor in 2011 and since then I have been the lead member for LGBT and women's issues for the council, and chair of Manchester's health scrutiny committee.

I've been a councillor at a time when Manchester council has had unfair budget cuts of over £350 million, alongside cuts to other public services like the police and NHS. It's tough, especially trying to fight the impact of the cuts, but it's never been more important that we stand up for our values.

Day in day out, as local politicians we make decisions that impact on every area of people's lives, so it's really important that people make their voices heard on 5 May.



**Chris Wills**

Thanks to unfair local government budget settlements that have left Manchester effectively £1.5m worse off per week, these are challenging times to be

a councillor. But I'm standing for election as a Labour councillor because it's vital UNISON has strong representation in local government. Even when difficult decisions have to be made, the needs of the most vulnerable – including LGBT people – must be recognised.

I'm a UNISON steward and the Labour Link officer for UNISON North West LGBT group. I'm also

on the national LGBT Labour committee.

With the Tories divided and squabbling over Europe, a messed-up budget and a failed austerity programme, this May represents a chance for Labour to recapture public trust and confidence. By gaining councillors in places where we need to win parliamentary seats at the next general election, Labour can build towards victory in 2020 – and only a Labour victory will enable Tory attacks on trade union rights and equalities to be undone.

## Use your vote

Deadline for voter registration for 5 May elections is 18 April. Even if you miss that, get registered – there is always another election round the corner. Check whether you are registered and register yourself at [aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote](http://aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote).

## Interested in becoming a candidate?

UNISON, the Labour party and our LGBT conference have all called for more candidates from trade unions and particularly from under-represented groups. LGBT candidates don't yet represent the diversity of our community. Black and/or trans candidates would be particularly welcome. Several regions are organising training – contact your regional Labour Link officer for details. LGBT Labour has a campaign fund – the Chris Smith List – to support openly LGBT candidates. Join LGBT Labour at [lgbtlabour.org.uk](http://lgbtlabour.org.uk)

## Radical proposals from first UK parliamentary trans equality inquiry

During the autumn of 2015, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee carried out an inquiry into transgender equality. UNISON, the TUC and most trans organisations submitted evidence, as did many individual trans people. Its report, published on 14 January 2016, was remarkable in its recommendations and contains much that UNISON welcomes. You can read it on the committee website at [parliament.uk/womenandequalities](http://parliament.uk/womenandequalities). The question now is whether the recommendations will be implemented.

In summary, the recommendations are:

- The government should agree a new cross-government strategy on trans equality within six months.

It must abide by the Yogyakarta principles – see [yogyakartaprinciples.org](http://yogyakartaprinciples.org) – on applying human rights law to sexual orientation and gender identity.

- The Gender Recognition Act, while progressive at the time, is now out of date. There should be a legal category for people with a non-binary gender identity and legal gender recognition should be based on self-declaration, not “on analysis by doctors and lawyers”.
- The age at which you can apply for gender recognition should be reduced to 16-17.
- Equality Act protections should be reframed from “gender reassignment” and “transsexual” to protections because of “gender identity”.
- Exemptions on separate-sex and single-sex services should be removed for anyone with a gender recognition certificate.

- Much of the report focused on poor treatment of trans people in NHS services, so a “root and branch” review must be completed within six months.
- Gender identity services should no longer be part of mental health services. Waiting times are unacceptable - the shortage of specialist clinicians must be addressed.
- The law should treat all hate crime with equal seriousness.
- There should be the option of recording gender as “X” on passports; removing gender altogether should be considered.
- There should be a new Prison Service Instruction and training on trans prisoners.
- Education institutions should ensure all staff are trained and trans equality should be included in the government review of initial teacher training.

An issue raised by many who gave evidence was the demand for the repeal of the spousal veto on gender recognition. This was not included in the inquiry recommendations. UNISON will continue to call for this and to campaign for the recommendations to be fully implemented.

**UNISON’s national trans network meets on the morning of Friday 15 July at the UNISON Centre in London. All trans members welcome – travel costs paid nationally. Email [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk) to register your interest.**

### UNISON LGBT CALENDAR

There’s a full calendar at [unison.org.uk/out](http://unison.org.uk/out). This is just a taste. Contact [out@unison.co.uk](mailto:out@unison.co.uk) for details.

#### 29 April - 2 May

Out for the weekend, LGBT weekend at UNISON Croyde Bay Holiday Village

#### 15 July am

UNISON trans members network meeting – all trans members welcome

#### 15 July pm

UNISON bi members network meeting – all bi members welcome

#### 16 September

UNISON disabled LGBT members network meeting – all disabled LGBT members welcome

#### 17 September

UNISON Black LGBT members network meeting – all Black LGBT members welcome

#### 18 – 20 November

2016 UNISON LGBT conference

*UNISON is also at pride and LGBT community events through the coming months – including many of those listed here*  
[pinkuk.com/events/gay-pride-2016](http://pinkuk.com/events/gay-pride-2016)

# Out in UNISON pass notes

**Name:** Referendum on UK membership of the European Union

**AKA:** Brexit vote

**When:** 23 June **Where:** Your local polling station, unless you apply for a postal vote.

**Theme tune:** The Clash's Should I stay or should I go?

**Should I be bothered?** Claims and counter-claims are flying around like rainbow confetti at a civil partnership but the one thing that practically everyone agrees on is that – yes – we should be bothered.

**What would happen if we vote to leave?** Depends who you listen to. Project Fear says the world as we know it would end. What we do know is that lots of our workplace rights came from the EU and are guaranteed by the EU. These rights include paid holidays, equal pay, part-time workers rights, parental leave, working hours, TUPE, protection from discrimination, health and safety, to name just a few.

**What would happen if we vote to stay?** Ummm...depends who you listen to. UKIP says that the world as we know it would end. For example, unsuccessful UKIP candidate for Sutton and Cheam Angus Dalglish says the NHS 'could collapse completely' because of immigrants from the EU. Lots of the 'vote leave' imagery is weather related. Floods, swamps and so on.

**Is there an LGBT angle to this?** Are you serious? There's always an LGBT angle. Not that LGBT

people all think the same. But as it happens, most of our LGBT rights came from the EU. Very few were implemented in the UK before they absolutely had to be. Even our civil partnership law originated from EU Court of Justice test cases on survivor pension benefits and gender recognition.

**That's all in the past – what about now?** The EU continues to push forward LGBT equality across member states and beyond. There's a road-map, an action plan, an LGBTI intergroup – yes I know it's all jargon, but it really does add up to something. You may remember MEP Anneliese Dodds who spoke at our conference last November. So one way or another, we should make sure we are registered to vote and use our vote. If you care about the weather – and who in the UK doesn't? – then yes, it's definitely a topical issue.

**What's UNISON's position on the referendum?** UNISON's NEC consulted branches, regions and national equality groups before deciding UNISON's strategy. The consultation asked about the most important issues and whether members wanted UNISON to campaign for a particular side or simply to encourage members to

vote. The NEC will agree its position on 13 April.

**Is there a UNISON LGBT position?** UNISON policy is set by the national delegate conference and the NEC. But we've been talking about it as an LGBT group so we can respond to the consultation. We sought LGBT members' views in our monthly LGBT e-bulletin. We discussed it with regional LGBT group convenors. At our recent policy weekend, the national LGBT committee agreed their view that UNISON should take a position – to campaign for the UK to remain in the UK.

**Hang on, I'm not going to be near my local polling station on 23 June.** I'm going to be in Brighton for UNISON national delegate conference/London for TUC LGBT conference/on holiday (delete as appropriate). Yes me too. But I'm smug cos I've already applied for a postal vote. You can apply to vote by post for ever, for a period or just for one vote at [gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote](http://gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote).

**Do say:** I've got my (postal) vote and I'm going to use it.

**Don't say:** I'm going to take a rain check on that.

Three simple ways to  
join UNISON today:



Join online at  
[joinunison.org](http://joinunison.org)



Call us on  
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep  
for an application form