

LGBT+: Equally strong, united and fabulous.

UNISON national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus committee

Annual Report 2021

#ULGBT21

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Introduction from the co-chairs

The annual report in 2019 started with the exclamation, “You couldn’t make it up..”! This year, two and a half years later, we are in exactly the same position. While the public sector was stretched to breaking point to contain COVID and still deliver services, the Tory government was hell bent on destroying us.

A lack of PPE, in again/out again lock downs, promising and then cancelling Christmas, refusing, then mandating facemasks, it has been one catastrophe after another. Added to that is the debacle of the Brexit agreement in Northern Ireland and the impact in the rest of the UK of a lack of hospitality workers, and truck drivers. All the while with a Home Secretary determined to make the UK as inhospitable as possible, breaking international rules in the process.

All this has contributed to a rise in hate crime across the board, with equalities being gradually eroded as people concentrate on other things – Surviving.

All pretence is now gone with ‘The heroes of the pandemic’, the NHS being offered a measly 1% pay rise whilst inflation is at 3% (ONS Aug 21) and an increase of 1.25% on NI is looming. So much for celebrating our NHS. As for the rest of the public sector, we can expect nothing, and in some case will be looking forward to a new era of austerity. The magic money tree that appeared for contracts to cronies, described as “an unedifying gold rush of chums and chancers”, has suddenly disappeared again when hard working people need it.

Regrettably, but probably unsurprisingly, it seems to us that “You couldn’t make it up” just doesn’t cut it anymore.

Now more than ever, we must challenge the erosion of equality together, we must fight for all our rights, and we must tackle discrimination in all its forms. To keep LGBT+ equality on the agenda, we need to step up our engagement with LGBT+ Labour and Labour link and we must not lose hope, or sight, of our ability to influence policy.

Here or abroad, our continuing internationalist perspectives give us insight to the globalisation of employment and LGBT+ human rights activism.

We are proud of the inclusivity and diversity of our LGBT+ group and are thrilled at how we have continued to engage throughout the pandemic despite its challenges.

The agenda shows that we still have work to do and we will, with pride!

Although this is a very different conference, at least it is closer to our traditional programme, and we finally get to enjoy the debates again. Have an inspiring conference, and we look forward to seeing your debating skills in action.

Neil Adams and Lucy Power

Recruiting and Organising

Well, this has got to go down as one of the most challenging years in the history of years really. A year when we have grown to be totally grateful for the technology we have and at the same time definitely loathing it. Phrases such as zoomed out, teams fatigue and furloughed all made entries into our ever evolving vocabulary and work from home, front line and key workers became integral parts of our chat.

It's been a tough year for us all and as the largest public service union it's been a time for great change in our working lives. While we recognise that a lot of our members have continued to work on the front line with the only change being the addition of PPE; we also know that for lots of members things have changed a huge amount with online working now standard in homes. What has also changed is the way that we as a LGBT+ group are organising around our membership and of course recruitment. In previous years Pride events have been a massive recruitment opportunity for the LGBT+ Self Organised Group but these have been sparse with just a few creeping in at the end of the season. We also ran a workshop on Pride in Procurement back in June which looked at how to approach your local pride groups and support them in their journey to better procurement.

We were pleased to see a number of online prides and we noted that Pride is a Protest was much more at the forefront of the agendas this year. We in UNISON of course have always remembered that Pride is and will remain a protest while we strive for equality. This year during conference we will mark Trans Memorial day and we also marked Bi+ Visibility day, Transgender Day of Visibility, Lesbian Visibility day, Internal Asexuality day, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia and International Women's day. We saw a number of online events for LGBT history day all of which raised our voices and our messages around learning from the past.

During LGBT+ live we launched the digital organising guide and during this year we have seen it used in many of our regions and branches with our activists delivering the training at any opportunity. We are so pleased that people have been able to adapt it to their own specific needs.

Within the Organising and Development sub-committee we have been working on producing an 'Engaging Branches' organising pack which will be launched at this year's conference. We have been listening to our activists and members over many years and have incorporated the tools that you have said you need into the pack. It includes examples of good practice and is aimed at including our branches and regions at the very heart of the work we do. We want to involve them at the beginning rather than as an afterthought so that we build on the existing links and develop new ones.

The keen eyed of you will have seen that we republished the article in Out in Unison on how to find and use the organising space on the national website. Any outdated materials within the organising space have also been updated.

The sub-committee made the decision not to run the recruitment awards in the same format this year. You will have seen the different format within your regional groups, and we have been really impressed how you as activists have continued to come up with new and innovative ways to get our messages out there while continuing to recruit new members both to our LGBT+ group and the wider union. Well done to all the entries this year and we look forward to announcing the winner at conference.

We have worked closely with the Learning and Organising Service (LAOS) on developing several training opportunities as well as improving on existing ones. We have developed the LGBT+ Ally training and the first launch of this was just last month and was extremely well received. We also

worked with LAOS to deliver two days of LGBT+ Branch Officer and Contacts training, both of which were also well received and oversubscribed. We have also worked on a PowerPoint presentation on the decline of LGBT+ lives. We co-hosted a fringe meeting at the online TUC LGBT+ conference on Intersex 101 Rights, voices and futures. We held our two regional convenors days online this year and these were well attended with great ideas for future training days coming from those.

Our factsheets have been updated as needed and we have new Bi+ and LGBT+ leaflets all of which can be ordered in the usual manner through the website. We continue to promote our network meetings and encourage participation in the Bi+, Black, Disabled and Trans network meetings through our social media and other communication networks.

This year we are able to have an in-person conference and those of us on this sub-committee are really glad of this. We have been advised around the organisation of conference by both the staff at the venue and our own conference team. We know that conference will be different and of course we will very much miss the caucus meetings, the service group meetings and the workshops but there are a lot of people working behind the scenes to deliver the best conference that we can while ensuring a safe working space for staff and for you, our members.



Bargaining

We are proud of our main role of supporting and informing the negotiation of decent workplace policy and practice. We continue to review our bargaining factsheets and update them on an annual basis.

Our core advice includes bargaining guides on LGB, Trans and Bi+ equality and our ongoing challenge is getting these into the hands of negotiators. We continue to work with our service groups to raise the profile of our bargaining advice. One of our most popular guides is the model trans equality policy.

We reported in 2019 that the Bi+ caucus had produced a 'How to be a good ally' leaflet. This and the 'How to be a good trans ally' are amongst the most downloaded documents on the LGBT+ pages of the website.

We continue to work collaboratively with the other self-organised groups, working

closely with them around hate crime and mental health. We've worked with all parts of UNISON to raise awareness and understanding of how COVID-19 has disproportionately affected our members with protected characteristics.

We have worked hard throughout 2021 for non-binary inclusion and have had success in educating members on issues our non-binary members face. Our non-binary presentation continues to be shared, and the model motion on non-binary inclusion has already been submitted to a number of regional councils.

We participated in a workshop on intersex workers at TUC LGBT+ conference in 2021. We remain committed to intersex equality as it is essential to us that LGBT+ members continue to be good intersex equality allies.

Due to COVID-19, the majority of UNISON

conferences were cancelled in 2020 and early 2021, which didn't give us the opportunity to send delegates to talk about LGBT+ equality.

The conferences that took place in 2020 included higher education, where our delegates Dave and Tracy moved and spoke to our motion on 'Promoting Transgender equality in Higher Education', and Community, where Louise and Clive moved motions on 'Engaging Branches in the Community Sector in LGBT+ recruitment and organising' and 'Inclusive workplace policies for non-binary members in the Community Sector'. Big thanks to our delegates who did us proud.

This year, we submitted motions to each of the virtual conferences. Each of these conferences had set criteria on the topics for motions.

Jackie moved motions at Special Delegate Conference on 'LGBT+ people – hidden figures in the pandemic' and 'No going backwards on equality'. We also submitted amendments to the motions 'A new model for

Social Care' and 'Burned out: Young workers and mentally healthy workplaces'.

Jackie and Anu attended the Special Local Government Conference and moved our motions, 'LGBT+ inclusive policies in Local Government' and 'LGBT+ workers health and well being' They also moved our amendments to the motion on 'Public Health' and 'The future of local government'

Our delegates to Energy conference were Maz and Michael who moved and spoke to our motion on 'No going backwards on LGBT+ equality in Energy'

Our motions to the special Water, Environment and Transport conference were on 'LGBT+ workers' health and wellbeing' and 'No going backwards on LGBT+ equality in water, environment and transport' and Neil stepped up at the very last moment to be our delegate.

A huge thank you to all our delegates who represented us so well on platforms that they'd never used before.

Campaigning

In September 2020, the UK Government's response to the 2018 consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) 2004 was finally released. The consultation on the reform of the Gender Recognition Act received over 100,000 responses, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the system of applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) was unnecessarily complex, invasive and expensive.

Over 80% of responders were in favour of removing the requirement for a medical report, over 64% said that there should not be a requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria in the future and over 78% were in favour of removing the requirement for individuals to provide evidence of having

lived in their acquired gender for a period of time

Despite this, the UK Government decided not to make any meaningful change to the GRA. They chose to ignore the experiences of trans and non-binary people and did not take the opportunity to allow non-binary people the chance to gain legal representation of their gender. A lack of non-binary inclusion leaves a significant part of the trans community without any legal recognition.

While we welcome the commitment as set out in the terms of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Scottish Greens cooperation agreement to reform the GRA in Scotland, we note that the Scottish

Government have been slow to act on GRA reform. We will continue to campaign in Scotland to ensure the Scottish Government keeps to its word.

The lack of significant, tangible reform of the Gender Recognition Act by the UK Government and any of the devolved administrations is a setback for our trans community, who have faced unprecedented and sustained attacks from sections of the media and public figures on, what seems, a daily basis. The divisive and often vicious vitriolic backdrop of protest from anti-trans campaigners has had a deep impact on the trans community, leaving many feeling scared and isolated.

We continue to fight the far right and their hate filled political agenda, and are concerned that anti-trans campaigners are using the same tactics that the far right, have used previously, against trans people. We have submitted a motion to our conference on this issue, which we hope will be passed and go to the 2022 national delegate conference.

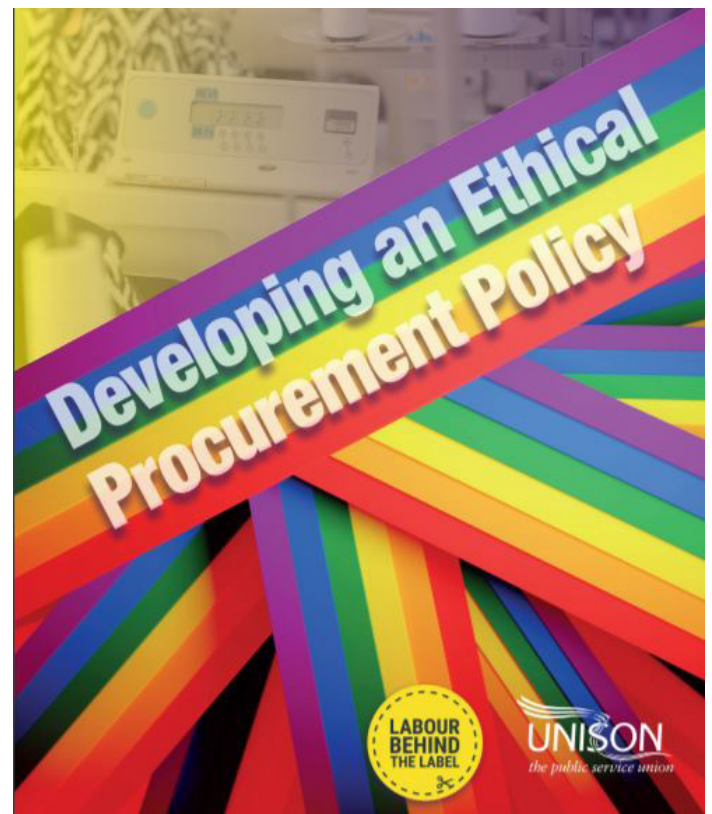
The UK Government appear to have torn up their commitment to end Conversion Therapy. We will continue to campaign and work with ally organisations to ensure that pressure is applied. Again, we welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to end Conversion Therapy in Scotland by 2023, but we must ensure they keep to their word.

We continue to remember that Pride is a protest and remains so as we still have a long way to go for full equality. For many of us who attend Pride, the marches where we carry our banners is the most important part of the day. With many local prides cancelled over the last couple of summers, we may not have had the opportunity to showcase our banners. But it hasn't stopped us from attending many virtual prides. Our regional and group LGBT+ groups have been part of virtual prides throughout our nations. Including, in 2020, when UNISON hosted it's first (and possibly only) virtual pride. A fantastic event, with photos, videos and promotion of the many UNISON LGBT+ and other equality documents.

When we are able to attend Pride events, we have produced a practical guide to recruiting and organising with pride – we've named it 'Putting politics back into pride'. We are hopeful that regional groups will promote this widely to branches and encourage branches to attend local prides.

During 2020 we worked closely with UNISON's International team and Labour behind the Label to produce a 'Pride in Procurement' resource, which gives a brief background on worker and LGBT+ protection in global supply chains, and questions whether brands releasing Pride collections show true solidarity or just want to capture the so-called 'pink pound'.

In 2021, working again with UNISON's International team and Labour behind the Label we produced a second resource 'Developing an ethical procurement policy'. This guide is for UNISON (and other) activists involved in planning Pride events, including a template ethical procurement policy and template letters to send to suppliers.



International

Despite the challenges facing UNISON in the UK in the last 18 months, we have kept an international perspective to our work. We never forget that we are part of a global labour movement and a global LGBT+ movement.

One of our long-standing objectives is to place LGBT+ rights on the agenda of international unions. Our global union federation, Public Services International (PSI), has had a long history of LGBT+ advocacy, which UNISON has been involved with from the beginning. In 2019 we welcomed some solid steps forward following the decision of the Council of Global Unions (CGU) to set up a joint working group on LGBTI issues. The first meeting of the working group developed detailed recommendations to the CGU for a programme of work. The LGBT+ campaign officer, Mitchell Coe, was appointed at the end of 2019.

Mitchell's programme for work within PSI has included working to develop a global PSI LGBT+ network and coordinating group, which will enable the sharing of best practice and successful campaigning around LGBT+ equalities across PSI affiliates.

We have been actively involved in this, and have also been monitoring and feeding UNISON guidance to the Global Unions LGBTI website <https://lgbtworkers.org/>

UNISON submitted a motion to the 2021 TUC LGBT+ conference calling for TUC affiliates to be encouraged to become actively involved in the work within the Global Union(s) of which they are members. We also held a very successful fringe meeting at the conference on "Global Union Federations and Why They Are Important for LGBT+ rights", with speakers Mitchell Coe (PSI), Nick Crook (head of UNISON international section) and Darienne Fleming (National LGBT+ Committee).

Global Unions sends a delegation to the annual UN Commission on the Status of

Women (UNCSW) conference. These trade union delegations work together before and during the conference on agreed outcomes. The UNCSW is the biggest annual gathering of women's rights organisations and activists in the world. UNCSW65 took place virtually and we were invited by PSI to join an 'LGBT+ contingent' within the Global Union delegation, which was a first for Global Unions. The Global Unions' UNCSW Statement called on governments to urgently live up to promises made in the Beijing Platform for Action and outlined trade union priorities to address gender-based violence in the workplace.

In February 2021, we attended a virtual meeting held by the European Trade Union Confederation to discuss the first draft of an ETUC position paper on the EU's strategy on LGBTIQ equality 2020 – 2025. We subsequently made a written submission to the ETUC with comments and suggestions for some changes to the position paper, and most of these were incorporated into the revised position paper approved by the ETUC Executive Committee.

In the summer of 2021, UNISON's membership of the UK Alliance for Global Equality (UKAGE), a coalition of UK-based civil society organisations working together to promote and support progress in global LGBT+ rights, was confirmed. UKAGE will be involved in the planning of the 2022 global equality conference

Our expertise and contacts on global LGBT+ organising is enhanced by our active membership of ILGA, the global LGBTI association. Darienne Flemington has continued to represent UNISON on the ILGA-Europe Board and has been one of the two co-chairs since October 2018. At the 2019 conference in Prague, Darienne was re-elected to the board for a two-year term with the highest number of votes. ILGA Europe has not been able to hold a physical conference since then, but it did hold a 'Gathering online' over a week in October

2020 with the AGM held over the weekend, and it will be holding a similar event in October 2021.

We were invited to make a virtual presentation to a workshop held at 2021 World Pride in August. Our session was about self-organisation and driving it in the Workplace. We produced a talking heads video and then took questions about the work that we do in UNISON. We highlighted that we recognise the need to continue working on making our group fully inclusive, and gave the examples of 'adding the plus' and making sure that our language is inclusive.

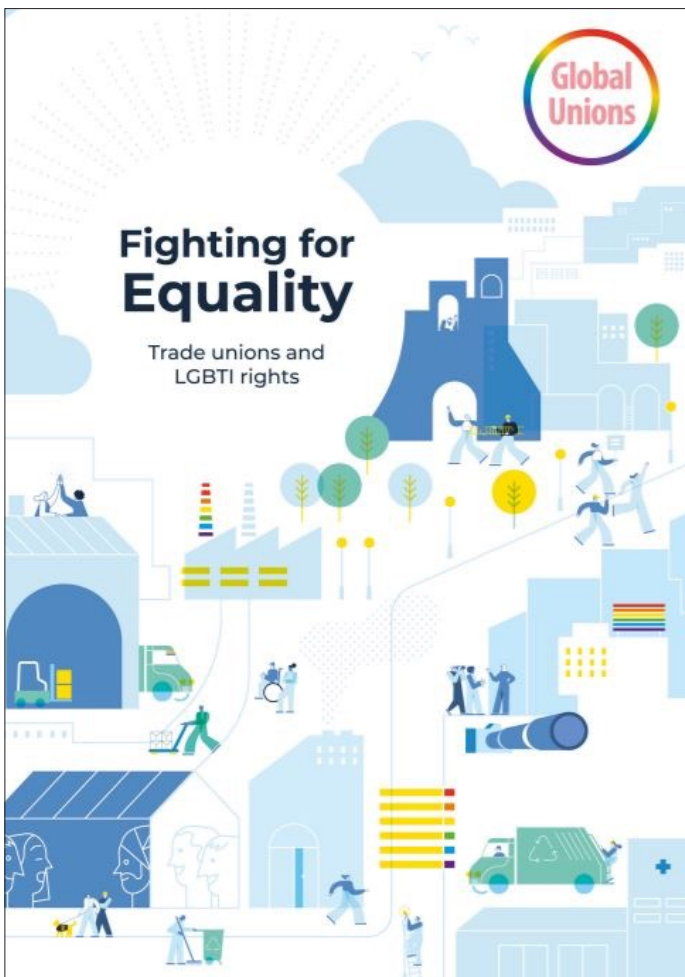
We continue to focus our work on UNISON's international priorities. As well as solidarity with sister unions, these include Palestine solidarity and modern slavery.

We have continued our work to raise LGBT+ awareness of the reality of the Israeli occupation and the importance of supporting the boycott, sanctions and divestment campaign. We gave a presentation on

Palestine at 2020 LGBT+ Live!, and the summer issue of Out in UNISON featured an article on pension divestment, publicising the revised UNISON guide "Is your pension fund investing in the occupation?"

The 'Pride in Procurement' motion carried at 2018 conference highlighted the increase in the number of companies selling 'Pride' related merchandise. We worked to raise awareness among LGBT+ members about ethical procurement, and a further motion carried at 2019 conference asked that we work with the International Section to increase awareness of the programme being developed on ethical procurement to tackle exploitation and modern slavery in public service goods global supply chains.

We worked with UNISON's International department and Labour Behind the Label to produce materials to enable activists to become more informed so that we can promote Pride in Procurement in our workplaces, in our communities and around the world. The guide to procurement was launched at LGBT+ Live! in November, and the second, a guide to developing an ethical procurement policy, was published in June. We held a training webinar at the end of June, with speakers from PSI, Labour behind the Label, and the International department. An article in the summer issue of Out in UNISON publicised these materials, available on the website, and encouraged regional groups and activists to use them to raise these issues with local Pride groups.



From the Caucuses

Bisexual members

Since our last Bi+ Caucus Annual Report in 2019, we have continued to work on challenging biphobia and bi erasure within the workplace. COVID-19 may have stopped us from meeting face to face, but our fight for equality has not faltered.

Our Bi+ Ally leaflet went out in early 2020 and is readily available via the UNISON website.

Over the past 2 years we have done two virtual workshops at BiCon. In 2020 we did a presentation on 'Tackling Biphobia in the Workplace', presented by Philippa Scrafton and Sophie Robinson. In 2021, we focussed on 'Bi+ Equality and Intersectionality in the Workplace', presented by Judy Richards and Sophie Robinson. Both of these were well received and we look forward to engaging with BiCon again in the future.

We have also continued our relationship with Bi Pride. For this year's virtual event we did a video session on 'Being Bi within the Workplace'. This was pre-recorded by Lucy Power and Sophie Robinson. For anyone who attended this virtual event, we hope that you found it informative.

We held our 2021 Bi+ Caucus Network day in July and we were joined by guest speaker Laura Heaton. Laura is a UNISON North West Regional LGBT+ Rep and gave an excellent presentation related to her work with 'Hub of Hope', shining a light on mental health issues. Sophie was re-elected as Co-Convenor in a vote and would like to thank everyone for being part of our great Network event. We would also like to give a special thank you to Philippa who drafted our 2 motions to this year's conference.

For Bi Visibility day, we utilised Social Media to send out a clear message of support and solidarity for our bi+ members.

We are excited about this year's Conference and although it may be a little different from

what we are used to, we are just happy to be back in person.

Finally, we would like to thank our national staff Anne and Susan for keeping us going through this difficult time and we'd also like to give a warm welcome to our new LGBT+ lead Mitch Coe.



Black members

The Black LGBT+ Network elected Frances Fenton and Jennie Antonio as the co-convenors of the Black LGBT+ Caucus. Bev Miller and Jennie Antonio were elected to attend the National Black Members' Committee (NBMC) meetings on behalf of the NLGBT+ Committee.

The five members of the Network who continued to serve as representatives NLGBT+ Committee were: Frances Fenton, Bev Miller, Anu Prashar, Judy Richards and Natalie Forbes-Smiley.

Paul Amann and Davena Rankin were elected from the Black LGBT+ Network to the Standing Orders Committee. Paul Amann was elected as the Network's representative to the TUC LGBT+ Committee.

The Network has continued to contribute to the work of the National Committee, although this has been done differently this year, often via remote work. There were fewer physical Prides this year and no physical Black Pride. Black members contributed film clips for inclusion in Virtual UNISON Pride stating why Pride is important and why Black Pride is important to us.

Network members participated in a World

Pride day webinar panel with other NLGBT+ committee members, to explain to the wider trade union movement why Black LGBT+ and other forms of self-organisation in UNISON is so important. For example, in Black LGBT+ Network it means that we can be authentically ourselves in UNISON and address the issues that matter to our particular intersectionality of identity. We don't have to decide whether we are LGBT+ or Black.

We participated in an international webinar on Queer Identity & Post Colonialism and were able to share with the international trade union movement and beyond, how we challenge the impact of colonialism that sought and seeks to erase LGBT+ histories and identities from our historical view. Examples given were the work on Black Trans Lives by the Trans Caucus and LGBT+ UNISON No Pinkwashing campaign in solidarity with colonised Palestine.

Members of the Network participated in a Pride in Procurement panel linking how poor working conditions and exploitation impact particularly on Southern hemisphere areas of production.

The Network contributed articles for Out in UNISON. Jennie wrote on the rise in Domestic Violence over the COVID period and how Black LGBT+ members can access appropriate resources. Judy wrote on how to become an ambassador for Hidayah LGBT, the secular organisation supporting LGBT Muslims. Bev contributed an article to Black Action on UK Black Pride and 50 years of Stonewall, making clear the Black activist roots of the Pride movement.

Bev and Jennie have represented on NBMC, contributed to work streams on the Committee and are working on the Working Group to organise the forthcoming physical NBM Conference. They have also written motions to the conference: Bev wrote 'Call Me By My Name (deliberately changing Black names)', Jennie wrote a motion on LGBT+ Mental Health concerns following the racist murder of Dalian Atkinson and contributed an LGBT+ intersectional focus to a motion on Domestic Violence support.

Anu wrote a motion on support for LGBT+ Afghans in the context of rising anti- LGBT+ incidents Earlier this year Bev and Jennie represented the Network on the NBMC 'Meet and Greet' panel webinar.

Following Judy's article on Hidayah LGBT, the organisation gave an engaging and inspirational presentation as part of the Black LGBT+ Network day. Following this, members decided to submit a motion to NLGBT+ Conference to promote the closer working of UNISON and Hidayah LGBT.

This has been a year of successes, finding new ways to engage in the work of UNISON together with other Networks, SOGs and the wider trade union and LGBT+ movement.

Disabled members

Disabled members LGBT+ disabled caucus has worked with the national committee throughout 2020 and 2021 which has meant adapting to virtual ways of organising and meeting. For some disabled members, this has been helpful to overcoming barriers to participation providing virtual meetings are inclusive and accessible.

Over the past 18 months, our work programme like many others has been dominated by the impact COVID-19 pandemic; raising awareness on mental health, campaigning and negotiating reasonable adjustments for disabled members including the right to work from home as a reasonable adjustment, combatting the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on disabled people and challenging medicalisation and pathologisation, promoting the social model of disability amongst other areas. In this work, the caucus has endeavoured to look at disability through an intersectional lens recognising that disability and discrimination towards disabled people manifests in different ways according to other characteristics.

The past year has been particularly challenging for disabled members. At the start of the pandemic, guidance was issued about 'Do Not Resuscitate' (DNR) being

implemented against people's wishes, disabled people were deprioritised in respect of medical interventions, people with learning difficulties being denied the right to vaccines and a language and employment culture change which resulted in disabled people being labelled clinically vulnerable and at risk.

We have continued to highlight the need for an inclusive human rights approach to public service delivery and campaigned for increased funding and investment for adult social care and health.

Members of the Caucus have played an active role in the LGBT+ Committee, sitting on sub-committees, participating in delegations to events and conference, chaired some sessions of LGBT+ Live. We are pleased that both co-chairs of the National LGBT+ Committee are members of the caucus.

We held a successful Network meeting in September, with a presentation from Deirdre Costigan, the National Officer for Disability Equality. Deirdre highlighted the disability campaigns that UNISON has been involved, the Let's be Reasonable campaign, the shortcomings of the Government's new disability strategy and the joint work being done with Inclusion London on a Disability Charter. We were told that due to UNISON, the access to work scheme was extended to disabled members working from home. Disabled members have had regular meetings with the shadow minister for Disability, Vicky Foxcroft.

We elected our disabled caucus representatives to the national LGBT+ committee, the LGBT+ standing orders committee, as well as the reserved disabled LGBT+ members seat on the UNISON delegation to 2020 TUC LGBT+ conference. The network agreed to submit motions and amendments to National LGBT+ Conference on social care, reasonable adjustments and working from home, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

The disabled members caucus met virtually the week prior to conference to discuss

conference business and organise speakers.

Louise and Bev continued to be the national LGBT+ representatives to the National Disabled Members committee, making sure that LGBT+ equality has a high profile within the disabled members work programme.

Transgender members

Due to the continuing restrictions on holding physical meetings, for the 2nd year in a row, the Trans Caucus Network meeting in July was held online. Whereas the network meeting we held in 2020 was a Webinar, with no interaction from attendees, the experience we've all gained over the last 18 months meant we were able to hold an interactive Zoom meeting.

With 20 members attending, a good number of whom had not previously attended a network meeting, we had a very productive meeting plus we had a speaker from Transgender Europe (TGEU). Leo Mulio Alvarez gave us an excellent talk about the work TGEU is undertaking on trans equality in Europe as well as an insight into the rise of anti-trans rhetoric within Europe.

As part of the caucus work programme, we continued with our promotion of UNISON's Trans Network among the wider community. To this end, members of the caucus represented the Trans Network at Sparkle in Manchester, and at Trans Pride in Brighton.

Many of you will be aware of the legal rulings that prohibited the Tavistock and Portman Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) from prescribing puberty blockers to young people under the age of 16.

Tavistock and Portman appealed against the ruling, and on the 17th September 2021, the Court of Appeal ruled in their favour. To quote the GIDS themselves:

We welcome the judgment on behalf of the young people who require the GIDS service and our dedicated staff. The judgment upholds established legal principles which respect the ability of our clinicians to engage actively and thoughtfully with our patients in decisions about their care and futures.

It affirms that it is for doctors, not judges, to decide on the capacity of under-16s to consent to medical treatment.

This has been a fundamental part of the legal basis for health services for young people in this country and it is very significant that it has been reinforced so strongly in this judgment.

A member of the Trans caucus was invited to be a speaker at an event hosted by LGBT+ Labour, along with another member of the National LGBT+ committee, Anu Prashar, with the topic being ‘Rights at work: LGBT+ women and the battle for equality’.

The caucus also welcomes the Scottish Government’s commitment to Gender Self-identity, though is concerned that there appears to be a second consultation on this

issue. The Scottish Government has yet to publish its response on the consultation, however Shona Robison, social justice secretary, said ministers were “committed to making necessary changes”.

She said: “The Scottish Government is committed to making necessary changes to the Gender Recognition Act to improve and simplify the process by which a trans person can obtain legal recognition. We will do this whilst ensuring we uphold the rights or protections that women and girls currently have under the Equality Act.

“Following a pause to allow resources to be diverted to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, work on the draft bill and its provisions has now resumed. More detail on the Government’s legislative programme will be included in the forthcoming Programme for Government.”

At the time of writing, the annual LGBT+ Conference should be taking place as a physical event in Brighton. While we will be unable to hold our usual caucus meeting during conference, if you are attending, feel free to come and say hello to caucus members – socially distanced of course.



In the regions

Eastern

We have continued to meet through the year online and plan to revisit hybrid meetings when possible. We managed to draft three motions with subgroups at the last meeting, and cover as many pride events as we could.

We had good attendance, noted that we don't have the diversity at this time to be properly representative, and have fed that back to other SOGs at regional and branch levels

Norwich Pride. One of our co-chairs has attended Norwich Pride organisers meeting and volunteered to help out at next year's Pride. This year was a streamed online show. See the whole show and follow Norwich pride [Norwich Pride – A celebration from the LGBT+ community for Norwich and Norfolk:](#)

Colchester Pride. Was attended by a member of the group who was on the Labour stall and also had UNISON merchandise and talked about UNISON.

Hertfordshire pride. An actual event took place and there was joint presence from a number of UNISON branches. There was good attendance and pictures already shared with James and UNISON more broadly. Thank you, Jack and Mish, for supporting and making it a success

Suffolk Pride. There was UNISON presence at two workshops on Mental Health and Trans Awareness - available via Suffolk Pride's Facebook page and there was UNISON presence at the Suffolk Pride event on 24th July. A short film was made of the event – with UNISON thanked for sponsorship on the end of the film and displayed on the day. Available to view [Suffolk Pride - Home | Facebook](#)

Conference Motions from Eastern Region

Three motions were drafted and put forward for LGBT+ conference. Two have been ruled out of order, one of these has a chance to

be included via amendment to a climate change motion already accepted and written by National LGBT+ Committee. The second motion that was not accepted related to the UK Policing Bill. One motion was accepted on making call centres more Trans friendly.

Year ahead plan includes continuing to support joint working with the other regional SOG's which is already helping each committee to connect with the others, support, and learn from them – thank you Sasha and Alex and all organisers for making this possible

East Midlands

The past 18 months have seen unprecedented challenges in the East Midlands Region as it has across all Regions within UNISON. We had a really positive and forward-looking AGM in December 2019 and the world stopped.

It was not until 6 months later that as an LGBT+ committee we were able to meet and then of course it was virtual. However, we had managed to make a short video in the Region promoting IDAHoBiT Day which was widely received. During the summer of 2019 we attended virtual prides around the region and even one or two actual events. There was a schools' LGBT+ Conference in Northampton which attracted lots of Regional Support. We also held a social event at the 2020 LGBT+ Live event. Our campaigns were to publicise and support the Tavistock ruling re puberty blockers, to create a newsletter for Branches to circulate and to perhaps make a video for National Coming Out Day.

2021 pretty much started where 2020 had left off and once again we were in lockdown measures. Prides were discussed and so we took the decision to support smaller Prides wherever possible over the Summer and we have made sure that that has happened. We are linking up with Regional LGBT+ Labour

group to see if there might be some joint opportunities for working together. Once again, an online social event was held for LGBT+ members across the Region. We did feel like we were treading water. We welcomed a new regional officer who is supporting our committee – Sean Kelly-Walsh.

We are looking forward to being more active in 2022.



Cymru / Wales

It has been an unusual year for everyone but that hasn't meant everything has stopped in Cymru/ Wales. As a group we have met virtually a number of times with good representation from all over the region from all service groups and seen the group grow in numbers and strength, knowledge and skills.

We continue to be visible throughout the regions structures with members of the group active from Branch level to Service group level, Regionally and Nationally and actively liaising with the other Self Organised Groups in the region and continue to attend a wide variety of events, albeit largely on virtual platforms, to promote the union, recruit and campaign and support our members to be more active at branch level.

We participate in as many of the regional recruitment campaigns and events as we can, encouraging participation from LGBT+ members in Cymru/ Wales with the group continuing to affiliate to ILGA and support the region with Hope Not Hate and Show Racism the Red Card campaigns.

The committee is looking forward to continuing both our online and gradual return

to in-person events over the next 12 months and to meeting up again at National LGBT+ conference.

Greater London

We made a good start to our work for the year 2019/20. We developed a work plan and scheduled our annual regional LGBT+ Training & Organising Day for April 2020. We submitted a motion to the regional council AGM in February 2020 asking for the region to support the LGBT+ conference 'Decriminalisation for Safety' motion to 2020 National Delegate Conference (NDC) and to urge all Greater London branches to support it too. The motion was passed, and the AGM also agreed that it would be one of the two motions submitted by the region to NDC.

And then of course everything changed. All regional meetings and events were cancelled, and then NDC was cancelled.

The regional LGBT+ committee didn't get to meet again until December 2020, and we have slowly been getting 'back on track' during 2021. We have had 3 committee meetings and two group meetings, all virtual, which were reasonably well attended.

In March, we started making provisional plans for London Pride and regional pride events, but in the end, they were all cancelled.

In June, we agreed to look at the possibility of arranging our regional LGBT+ Training & Organising Day for the autumn, but it was soon clear that this was not feasible.

Our successful bid to the regional pool last year for materials and equipment for use at regional events has been transferred to this year, and we are now looking at detailed costings.

Our group AGM is scheduled for 23 October.

We continue to be involved in the work of the region, and to send representatives to other regional committees.

We also continue our active involvement in the region's international work and ILGA-Europe. We had a delegate to ILGA Europe's (virtual) 2020 AGM, and the Extraordinary General Meeting held on line in June 2021. We will also have a delegate to the (virtual) AGM in October 2021.

Northern

Like most of us there have been no 'in person' meetings since lockdown began over 19 months. While it didn't take too long to get to grips with using Teams or Zoom and having on-line meetings the effect of not physically meeting up has had negative and positive impacts.

Meeting on-line initially gave the opportunity for those who could not physically attend meetings in the past to participate. This brought some new faces to our early meetings which was really positive. We tried to keep members interested by having guest speakers and discussing topics that were not always trade union related but did impact on LGBT+ members, one of our most popular being when we invited members of different faiths to explain to us about being LGBT+ and religious.

Unfortunately, as lock down went on it became harder to maintain interest in meetings and as a result attendance levels dropped back to being our regular attendees.

As 2021 has progressed and people have started to venture outdoors again, we have managed to attend two local Pride events. Durham Pride and then Northumberland Pride were attended by members along with some support from our Regional/Branch Offices. The role/purpose of Pride Events has been a talking point for some years now and with that discussion in mind the region have decided to focus more on the local Pride events in our area instead of the major Northern Pride. Despite the natural trepidation about mixing with large groups of people again the events were reasonably well attended and worthwhile.

At the time of writing we are still to fix a date for our first in person meeting, as is every other regional group/committee in our in the Northern Region but we are hopeful this will take place before the end of the year and that next year we can get back to a regular meeting cycle and kick start our activities again.

As our conference is rapidly approaching we are looking forward to meeting our fellow activists from around the country, sharing ideas, being inspired and rebuilding friendships.

Northern Ireland

We have seen our engagement increase a lot with the several projects we have promoted and campaigned for, including the first ever Rural Pride in Northern Ireland which was Omagh Pride just last week. we continue to support our residents and have gained several new members to our LGBT+ SOG here in Northern Ireland. This has come about from our continued campaigning and recruitment drive. It is nice to see members increasing in a very challenging time for all SOGs.

The amount of work we continue to do in our Journeys series is outstanding and is a great recruitment tool to increase awareness and membership. There has been several Journeys now completed with some being online and face to face pre- COVID. The last one, Different Journeys, reaching over 5000 views on Facebook. It featured a great history lesson for people who were unaware of the importance of UNISON here in Northern Ireland supporting the Gay Community in the early days. It also highlighted the great support from the women's committee in those early days.

We continue to organise Well Being days to Foyle Pride Festival which sees us working in partnership highlighting great support networks providing mental health services etc. This is something we are so proud to sponsor and promote to our members and potential new members.

Another great programme that we're working

on at present is the Mark Ashton project. We are working closely with Jude Copeland who leads the national project. Jude also won the Mark Ashton Award at Foyle Pride Festival 2021.

We continue to send out newsletters to keep people up to date with current campaigns we are working on like Trans Awareness and motions going before our local councils. Our social media is also very important at this time when it is hard to meet up in person and let our members know we are there for them.



North West

Hot off the heels of LGBT+ Live! where we were delighted that registrations for the event from the North West were up over 50% from attendance at the 2019 Conference, with 55 people registered from our region; we held our first open meeting of 2021 in January which was really well attended. We're delighted that the vacant co-convenor position on the committee and most other positions are now filled, taking the committee to 19 members, supported by the wider group.

In February we were pleased to be able to support colleagues at Liverpool John Moores University by delivering UNISON's 'Our Proud History: From lone voices to collective union action on LGBT+ equality' presentation. In March we participated in a TUC North West event on Mental Health and COVID-19, highlighting the work we're doing with Chasing the Stigma and the Hub of Hope

to signpost to support LGBT+ people to organisations that can assist them with their mental health.

We delivered our first open training day in May focussing on creating and building branch LGBT+ groups, highlighting best practice from other branches and talking through what works and what other options are available if things aren't working out. We also held an international quiz on LGBT+ rights.

Our second open meeting of the year held in May focussed on our upcoming activities for the year, looking at a survey of branches about LGBT+ self-organisation, a motion to Regional Council on improving attendance at self-organised group conferences and discussions on how we should best engage with Pride events virtually this year.

We were pleased to be able to submit an entry into Liverpool Pride's virtual march this year, with a recorded video of one of our co-convenors alongside pictures of us at previous Pride events being displayed during the stream.

We formally launched our partnership with the Manchester Village Spartans Rugby Union club at their pre-season club gathering where we got first sight of their new club shirts emblazoned with the UNISON logo on the front. The partnership has been close to a year in the making and is one built on our shared values of LGBT+ inclusion, not just in work but in society. We plan to be working together regularly throughout the next few years on important LGBT+ campaigning work as well as providing support to other LGBT+ organisations.

Whilst we have not organised attendance ourselves at any Pride events this year we were pleased that UNISON Salford Branch felt it important to have a presence at this year's Salford Pride Pink Picnic and we were pleased to be able to support them with materials and a bit of physical presence at the event.

The first joint meeting of the North West Regional LGBT+ group and the Cumbria

branches partnership took place in August virtually. Four branches, spanning South Lakeland up to the North of Carlisle, were represented with Branch Secretaries and LGBT+ officers in attendance, alongside NW co-convenor who chaired the meeting. Discussions took place including about a joint presence at Cumbria Pride later this year, ongoing work to improve LGBT+ Equality in the workplace and training support from the regional Group. This is a great foundation to promoting LGBT+ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplaces across Cumbria.

Following our previous work on LGBT+ Mental Health awareness we have continued to grow strength and support in this area. We have delivered presentations at a number of Webinars set up by the TUC on Mental Health Matters. One of our Co-convenors has recently spoken at the UNISON Bi+ Members Caucus meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on the LGBT+ community and more specifically Bi+ mental health which was well received and has informed a motion to this year's LGBT+ conference. We continue to collaborate with charities, such as POPYRUS and Chasing the Stigma, often posting and sharing support on social media. This has now led to the production of a "Signpost to Support" wallet sized card which includes our logo. This will be launched at Cumbria pride and then handed out at events across the country to signpost LGBT+ people to specific mental health support.

Our social media channels have been regularly utilised across the year to promote our events, to mark events of note and as an effective part of our campaigning activities. Our presence has continued to grow, with over 650 people following us on Facebook, over 470 on Twitter and over 100 people on our mailing list.

Scotland

The last 18 months has been a difficult one for us all. Most events were cancelled or moved to an online and digital format, reducing our capacity for engagement and recruitment. Due to the ongoing pandemic, it was agreed to cancel our 2020 AGM and roll over the committee until 2021. Our next AGM is planned for October 2021.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have continued to support our LGBT+ members locally within all sectors in response to COVID-19 and other issues of concern.

Work was completed on the NHS Scotland rainbow badge and associated learning pack. The Corporate Communications strategy was agreed and completed for the launch of the project in July 2021. We undertook several stalls to work with NHS staff forums to promote engagement and encourage staff to make a pledge to the LGBT+ ally programme. A short YouTube video provides an overview of the NHS Scotland Pride Badge: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRC_23DPljw



Face to face ILGA conference 2020 was cancelled but an online webinar was held over the week of 19th to 25th October. A delegate attended on behalf of the region for all plenary sessions, voted in elections to ensure our UNISON voice was heard in decision making within the ILGA board.

We were delighted that

most of our committee attend this year's STUC LGBT+ workers conference and to have our own Willie Docherty as chair of the committee and conference this year. Our delegates moved our motion on the wider impact of COVID on LGBT+ Health, Mental Health, and social care services across Scotland with effect on rural areas. We spoke to several other motions to support and direct the work of the STUC committee. We were delighted that we were successful in taking up two seats on STUC LGBT+ committee and the delegate to next year's STUC Congress.

Working collaboratively with a cross branch LGBT+ group from the Grampian region, the Scottish LGBT+ Committee and Scotland's LGBT+ lead officers, a UNISON IDAHOBIT webinar was organised with a panel of UNISON and community LGBT+ activists representing all aspects of IDAHOBIT. The evening was both informative and enjoyed by all who attended.

Our committee discussed our aims and objectives and our action plan at our policy forum meeting in February. We also discussed the recent information around the 'Hate Crime Bill' and the little time given for organisations to comment on the bill and its impact. This is of concern to us, and we will raise any concerns noted from this process or the content of the Bill directly with the Scottish Government.

Our webpages and social media have been utilised in keeping members involved in surveys such as the LGBT+ health and wellbeing survey for NHS Glasgow and Lothian, Virtual Pride events such as West Lothian, Fife, Perth. We have also promoted attendance at our virtual network days run by UNISON National and highlighted a variety of issues and organisations during Pride Month.

In September, we attended several Pride events including, Bute Pride for the first time and held a stall. We had good attendance as the only trade union present and great visibility in local press and online presence. We addressed the crowd and promoted being

part of a Trade union and the importance of our equality agenda both in UNISON and our predecessors. Discussions took place with the Highland Branch, and they sponsored our stall at this event. We hope to work on this and build a Highland and Argyll and Bute joint event and or sponsorship to allow the growth of this excellent smaller event as it finds its way and promotes inclusion in the islands and beyond. This was followed by our attendance at Dumfries and Galloway Pride and once again with the support of local reps held a stall and promoted UNISON and our equality work. We will aspire to assist in the growth of Borders and Dumfries events, attend further events which are arranged as we move through the remainder of the year. At time of writing, we will also be participating. at Oban pride.

South East

The South East Regional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender plus (LGBT+) group has spent the year regrouping and preparing for 'opening up' and all the challenges that will bring. Having to re-engage in physical proximity to others brings its own challenges and concerns. Our co-chairs remain Pól O'Ceallaigh and Liv Naylor, and the committee are supported very ably by our support officer Patrick Young who continues to invigorate the group. Our national reps remain Lucy Power and Andy Armsby.

In his role the National LGBT+ Committee, Andy is co-chair of the Campaigns and Policy Development (CPD) Sub Committee. They ensure that motions on campaigning decided at conference are taken forward, and that LGBT+ issues are mainstreamed within all UNISON's campaigns. Lucy was elected as co-chair of the National LGBT+ Committee.

At a regional level, participation definitely increased initially when holding virtual meetings, but that seems to have waned in recent months. It is hoped that the reintroduction of physical meetings will stop the decline. There may even be the option of hybrid meetings, which are very much supported, especially by our disabled members. We meet four times a year, with the occasional committee meeting in between times. We usually have a speaker, and in the past have had presentations from Mermaids, the Albert Kennedy Trust, and The Terence Higgins Trust. Our AGM is held in October, and we welcome everyone from the SOG, whether you're out in your branch or not.

As a region, we are very proud of our interactive Equalities Calendar. Launched in May 2021 it provides a day by day account of all things equalities related, including monthly activities such as LGBT+ History month, and Black History month. Of course, it wouldn't be complete without also reflecting the equalities activities of UNISON itself. It runs all the way up to April 2022, and really is a one stop shop for planning events and celebrating our diversity. We

would like to thank Patrick for his hard work in pulling it together.

As a region we have been very enthusiastic about supporting Prides, whether virtual or actual. There is always the risk that, with the big Prides dominating, sometimes the smaller Prides lose out on sponsorship. This has the consequence that those who identify as LGBT+ in some more conservative areas of the country can feel marginalized and unsupported. The South East Region has taken this as an opportunity to be one of the main sponsors for those smaller Prides. In this way we have been able to ensure that the UNISON brand is at the forefront of small developing Prides.

We sponsored four prides this year - Gravesham Pride (held in Gravesend), Medway Pride (held in Rochester), Crawley Pride, and Reading Pride. We had lots of interest, and are exploring ways of making sure we capitalise on the recruitment opportunities and record which pride events our success comes from. A big shout out to Crawley Local Government for their generous contribution to Crawley Pride. This year's Surrey Pride was not sponsored by BAE, which caused such consternation in 2019. Another shout out to Surrey County Branch who sponsored Surrey Pride. We would also like to thank all those who supported us on the stalls.

We are looking forward to a much more open 2022 and look forward to seeing all our South East Region LGBT+ members at our meetings.



South West

The SWLGBT+ group have met virtually since February 2020. Although it has been a very long time since we have seen each other in person, we have made some progress utilising the virtual platforms. Following on from our virtual meeting discussions we sent out a survey to all members on our database that identify as LGBT+, and to all members who have attended the NLGBT and NLGBT+ conferences in the past 5 years. Mid 2021 we analysed the results and agreed the 2021 work programme that loosely followed the national committees' programme but focused more on building capacity for and of LGBT+ members in the South West. Our planning included raising awareness of non-binary identities and to champion trans equality as key priorities to support our members. We continue our collaboration and work with the other SW SOG's. (South West Self Organised Groups)

We had a very good response to our survey and held a 2 hour long 'get to know you' seminar with different committee members taking the lead in answering questions. The drop-in was well attended and there were several new young members in attendance. The survey highlighted that the majority of the members who participated did not want an in-person meeting on a Saturday as we have done traditionally, but instead wanted more frequent virtual meetings over a weekday lunch period with perhaps a longer weekend meeting with a stay over once or twice a year. We have collated all the

suggestions and are in the process of putting together a programme that will hopefully ensure that we have a greater participation in our regional SOG than we have had for a few years now.

The committee continues to have good representation on many of the regional service group committees and is focusing on ensuring that we maximise our impact. We have attended a wide variety of events, albeit largely on virtual platforms, to promote the union, recruit and campaign and support our members to be more active at branch level. Several LGBT+ activists hold Branch Officer posts and participate on regional committees. This helps to maximise our visibility, involvement, and impact in the region.

We continue to promote UNISON and TUC Equalities learning to all our members and to the committee – two of whom have attended the Ambassadors Programme delivered by Show Racism the Red Card. We regularly send information to branches in the South West using existing updated publicity materials. This included reminders for our members who identify in the LGBT+ caucus' groups of the national network days

The SW region remains affiliated to ILGA World. As we are in the European region, we engage with ILGA Europe. The SW LGBT+ website has information regarding contact details and relevant links to the national website, including our Facebook page which goes from strength to strength.

West Midlands

The group has been meeting via Teams for all of 2021 which has enabled more people to join the meetings from across the region as the meetings have been held on a Friday at lunchtime. It should be noted that not everyone has access to being online so some have joined by phone.

Recruitment

There were no physical Prides to attend in 2020 and by the end of June 2021 the

region saw the postponement of Birmingham Pride and the cancellation of Coventry Pride and the moving of date for Stoke Pride.

Stoke Pride

Thus on Saturday 7 August we attended Stoke Pride in the wonderful Hanley Park. We were joined on our stall by the Stoke Care Workers for Change, a West Midlands Region initiative to recruit and organise care workers, and we also promoted the Consultative Ballot on Pay for Healthcare members to the many healthcare members who visited the stall.

The stall also received a donation of healthy snacks courtesy of the Staffordshire Community Health branch which proved very popular.

We were visited by numerous Labour Councillors and the former Labour MPs and photos were taken. The new Conservative MP also visited us but we declined a photo.

We sponsored a signer on the stage and also paid for accessible toilets to be provided.

The stall was COVID safe and it was great to be at a Pride again.

Birmingham Pride

This is on the weekend of 25/26 September with the usual procession on Saturday 25 September. The Regional group is registered for the procession and will be marching with other trade unions as usual. The procession is expected to be the largest LGBT+ march in the country in 2021.

There is also a new community evening on Friday 24 September which some of us will attend to assess if this is a better place to promote UNISON if it is continued in 2022.

Hereford Pride

Saturday 2 October sees the resurrection of LGBT+ activity in Herefordshire with Hereford Pride. A member of the regional group has been very active in helping this get off the ground. The event is being organised by a new Community Interest Company. The SOG will be assisting on a stall being run by

the Local Government and Health branches. We are also paying for some spoken word performers. We are assured that UNISON will be getting good and frequent thanks and publicity throughout the day.

Organising

The group and its members remain active in the regional structures of UNISON and the SOG is seen as an integral part of the life of the region. Members have attended Regional Council and Regional Committee. A motion for re-affiliation to ILGA Europe was successfully moved at the Regional Council in April 2021 with 3 members of the group speaking.

Members of the Group are also active with the Midlands Inclusion Committee of the Midlands TUC. The 30th October will see members attending the Midlands TUC Equalities Conference as a physical event in Birmingham. This will be preceded by a day for each strand of Equalities so on Monday 25 October there will be a lunchtime Zoom event where Quinn Roache TUC LGBTQ+ Officer and Maria Exall TUC LGBTQ+ reserved seat will be speaking in a discussion chaired by Andy Chaffer.

The Region affiliating to ILGA Europe has meant that we are now able to be involved from the West Midlands and we sent a delegate via Zoom to the 2020 Conference and the 2021 Finance meeting.

Our 2 representatives to the LGBT+ National Committee are regular attendees and participants in the debates and the work of the Committee.

Conference

The Regional SOG has elected 2 delegates to the 2021 Conference in Brighton. We did submit motions which were unfortunately ruled out of order. We will see if our amendments get onto the order paper.

We hope you all enjoy LGBT+ Conference in Brighton.

Yorkshire and Humberside

Our regional priorities have remained in line with the national priorities of responding to the threats to public services and a continued focus on recruiting, to the union and to the SOG.

We have carried on our great work with the branches in our region from last year. Like most of the regions during the pandemic we've been unable to be as active in the region as we would've liked. Due to a lot of the pride events being cancelled or carried out online.

However, we have increased the number of members engaged with the SOG due to meetings being held virtually due to the pandemic. Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/unisonYHLGBT) and our twitter page @YHLGBT has been an invaluable tool for engagement, with a number of new members making contact.

We've now got a new Regional Equality officer which has been a brilliant step in the right direction. The new appointment has been in regular contact with our SOG, we've seen a lot more assistance and communication between the SOG and the officer.

One of the main big aims of our region is to encourage more women to be involved in our Regional Group. If anyone is interested in being more involved, then please contact us via the above methods above. We continue to participate on all regional committees and reports are received back from the delegates at each meeting of the SOG.

Moving into 2022 with the pandemic now hopefully behind the country we will start to return back to some normality and be out and about in the region attending events with branches.

