

Challenging racism in the workplace

Why is it vital to challenge racism in the workplace?

Because it will

- ensure **Black** workers have equal access to career progression, good quality jobs and pay
- help address deep-rooted discrimination, and reduce incidents of bullying, harassment and other unfair treatment, including stereotyping
- improve the well-being of Black members
- contribute to the growth and future strength of your branch
- recruit new members and activists, of benefit to all the membership
- place public authorities under a proactive duty to identify and publicise opportunities to promote equality.

No workplace where racism is allowed to flourish can ever be effectively organised. That's why anti-racist work must be part of all branch activity.

It is unlawful to discriminate in recruitment or employment because of race. Race is defined as: race or colour; nationality (including citizenship); ethnic or national origins. **Further information in 'Equality and diversity guide'**

How can branches challenge racism in the workplace?

Gather information

- Talk to Black members through forums and surveys, and encourage them to attend branch meetings including AGMs (annual general meetings) – make sure Black staff know why you want them to be involved
- Set up a Black self-organised group to support the branch in negotiating, organising, recruitment and retention. Ask members about their experiences. **Further information in 'Organising for equality' and Black members equality | Fighting for fairness and equality | UNISON National**
- Appoint a branch equalities officer if you do not have one already. Ask for their feedback and involve them in decision-making, particularly around equalities within the annual branch development plan. This post is set out in the **UNISON rule book** and has a number of important functions. **Further information in 'Organising for equality'**
- Ensure all branch activists attend UNISON training so that they can negotiate on race. **Further information in <https://learning.unison.org.uk/>**
- Check out the employer's equality and diversity policy and action plan. Are all staff aware of it? How effective is it? Does the employer undertake equality impact assessments of all policies and procedures? If not, why not? **Further information in 'Equality impact assessments'**
- Check out the employer's workplace monitoring data by ethnicity – does it show that the workforce represents a diverse community or are few Black people applying for posts or being recruited? Are Black staff holding posts at all levels and grades within the workforce?

If not, why not? Are Black staff becoming union members and active within UNISON?

- Is a [freedom of information request](#) necessary to get more information from the public authority?

Develop a branch action plan

- Set up a team to lead on the work. Make sure it includes the branch equalities officer if one is already in place, Black reps and a mix of experience amongst branch negotiators.
- Evaluate the information gathered to identify the major issues to be tackled, current priorities and possible solutions. Is there a link to your annual branch development plan?
- Consider the likely reaction from management when raising the issues, and plan for any expected response.
- Identify what you need to do to get support from all branch members for the solutions.
- Decide if there is a need for a workplace campaign and what the timeline should be for it.
- Agree on who is to be involved. What additional support and resources are needed?
- Consider how the branch will recruit and organise around the issue. And make sure you provide timely feedback to members on progress.

Talk to management

- Identify the most appropriate forums to raise the issues. Make sure Black members are included in the negotiating team.
- Request that equalities is a standing agenda item on team meetings.
- Are chief executives, board members, senior managers, influencers such as school/college governors, elected members within councils and members on NHS trust boards, as well as any other recognised trade unions actively committed and involved in this work?
- Be clear about the problems you're raising and what you're trying to achieve in terms of tangible outcomes and practical workplace arrangements across the whole organisation.
- Put forward positive solutions and ask the employer to include them in their equality and diversity action plan.
- Request that an update on the equality and diversity action plan is added as a standing item on the agenda for the joint negotiating forum.
- Request mandatory equalities training for all staff including managers to help implement the solutions successfully.
- Make sure the employer is clear about who will lead on implementation and has allocated sufficient time and resources for it.
- Ensure that all members are aware of the outcome of discussions so they can see the benefit of their involvement.

Don't forget to review your activity

- Work on race equality is a key target within the joint branch assessment process. The process enables branches to conduct an appraisal of their work, prioritise issues, set targets and allocate necessary resources.
- Have you reported any agreements to UNISON's bargaining support so that good practice can be shared with other branches? Send details to bsg@unison.co.uk