

CWU Northwest Region - Annual Equality Report 2019

2019 has seen a lot of change across the Equality organisation within the CWU. Redesign is changing the face of how equality will be viewed within the union and we will all be striving to embed equality in everything we do. As early as April 2019, we were looking at ideas of how we might do things differently in the Region and some great ideas were put forward. 2019 also saw the ending of the national Advisory Committees who have done some fantastic work over the years, changing and influencing union policy, raising awareness of many equality issues, attending events, organising forums and creating detailed documents.

Northwest Branch Officers, Equality Officers, BAME Officers and Women's Officers have continued to be involved in local and regional campaigns run by the CWU, other unions and the NWTUC as well as being present at larger events such as PRIDEs. 2019 saw our officers attending the last of each of the four separate CWU Equality Conferences; Women's, LGBT, Black Workers and Disability. Workplace events have taken place across both constituencies and these have been very well received by members. Officers have also worked closely with other Regional committees such as the Young Workers to support them and bring equality into their initiatives too.

2019 may not have been the most settled year for Officers with new Regional Lead positions being created and the uncertainty of how the roles should be approached but we will go into 2020 with fresh eyes and be open to new challenges, learning and development.

Here's to 2020, the year equality becomes embedded in everything we do. Congratulations to the new Equality Strand Leads. Please contact them directly for any help and advice.

Peter Pascall – BAME
Tony Windle- Disability
Sheila Biggins – Women's
Cathryn Heath – LGBT+

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Regional BAME Lead Annual Report 2019

Since being voted in for my new position as North West Regional BAME Lead, I've not been able to engage as much as I would have liked to due to the nature of the hours I work and the shifts I do. There has been a lot of pressure on the department I work in so that has taken up a considerable amount of my time helping etc.

During the last few months I have attended the inaugural CWU North West Executive Committee (NWREC) meeting on the 29th of October 2019 and the TUC North West Equality Conference on the 2nd of November 2019.

Within the NWREC meeting, some very valid and interesting points were raised as to the direction the committee and the roles of the new Equality leads should take. Ian Taylor made some very straight to the point comments that the NEC should bring headline news to the Regional committee, and that the Regional Leads are to be the conduit between the region's branches and the Head office. He also asked what message will the NEC bring to the leads and the branches?

My plans are to work closely with the other Regional leads, to have a united common stance on all equality issues and not just see my role as a singular and stand-alone role or objective.

We have agreed to go to, and help with, events with the other leads of whichever strand to put the message out there that we are totally committed to this cause. So, for instance if there is a disability strand event the BAME, Women's and LGBT+ leads will all be there to help and support that event and so on and so forth with conjunction with events for the other strands.

Another subject that will have to be looked at closely is the mapping of branches in the region to make sure that as Equality Leads, we know exactly who and where the members are that we need address in our individual roles and again help each other where the strands' and our trade unions' objectives overlap. For example, there are female disabled LGBT+ BAME members. So, there is obvious crossover within the strands so again, we must show solidarity for all members across the board and help each other in whatever capacity we can.

The North West TUC Equality Conference touched on many subjects such as equal pay, period poverty, tackling the far right, sexual harassment, reasonable adjustment disability passports at work, racism in the workplace and mental health awareness – or rather the lack of support and awareness to tackle these things. We touched on the fact that now PRIDE has become a bandwagon that employers and big business have jumped on and hijacked for commercial reasons and not for the real meaning of the events and celebrations. One of the most eye-opening parts of the conference was when Carl Roper the TUC organising and Education Manager gave some very sad, startling and sobering statistics and information on the state of trade union membership in the UK. I was very shocked to hear that only 23% of the UK workforce are in trade unions. He then went on to tell how 20 million people in the UK wide are not in trade unions. There was also the obvious worry of the lack of and dwindling number of young people who are trade union members and how few are joining up to add to the already 6 million total of trade union members.

So, for me the main objectives in my new role are to

1. Help my other Equality leads so we work as a team to help the cause of all the strands and stand as one.
2. Make sure we identify the individuals in each strand in our region from mapping and finding the crossover points within the strands so there are no gaps in our approach.
3. As an individual within a team structure, to acquire and complete all the training necessary to carry out my role and to help recruit new members especially young members who we can get involved and train up to keep this trade union going and keep its future strong.

There isn't very much else I can say until I start getting more involved in the role and I can see exactly what obstacles I may encounter. But I'll give my all and do my best to overcome them.

Peter Pascall
NW Regional BAME Lead

Regional Disability Lead Annual Report 2019

The role of Regional Disability Lead is new and still very much a work in progress. There is much to learn and achieve and I hope to do the role justice over the next twelve months and beyond. It is my hope that equality will become increasingly mainstream within the CWU and I plan to play a part in this by developing this role. To enable me to achieve this I have set 3 aims to achieve in the next 12 months.

The Aims are:

1. To be the go-to person for reps and branches for disability related enquiries.
2. Raise awareness on various disability conditions.
3. Organise one equality event per year within the region.

In order to achieve these aims, it is my intention to continue to work with the branches, the equality committee and relevant individuals. Only by doing this will equality become mainstream and achieve the aspirations of re-design. I intend to encourage all Branches and Reps to work with myself and their Equality Officers, and to equality-proof their local agreements. I already use social media to raise awareness of the various disability conditions and will continue to do so. I want to organise one major event per year in the region that focuses on disability and also support other Regional Leads and Equality Officers and Branches with any of their own events. In order to achieve this, I also need to educate and upskill myself on the relevant law related to equality. This I can achieve with the continuing support of my Branch and the NW Regional Executive Committee (NWREC). Since the start of the role, I've offered information and given advice to various members and Reps regarding equality issues. Using social media, I've also raised awareness from mental health to the plights of disabled people applying for benefit to assist with their daily living, which is something I'll continue to do. I've also supported the postal campaigns, and the recent General Election campaigning. I'm also the Branch delegate to my local Trades Council which I only started this year and attend all meetings. This is a great way to share what's happening in our union and gain ideas from others attending.

Tony Windle
NW Regional Disability Lead

Regional Women's Lead Annual Report 2019

I took this role on in October 2019 as a challenge to myself and because I wanted to build on the good work already done for the women's agenda in the Northwest. At the first NWREC meeting I outlined my priorities of:

1. Challenge and educate myself
2. Create a network of women
3. Run events.

I really challenged myself At the National Assembly of Women (NAW) Conference on the 26th October. One of the speakers talked about women only spaces, saying transgender women were stepping all over our rights, which I strongly disagree with, so I verbally challenged this position, in a room full of women who seemed to support her view! I gave a verbal report at the NWREC on 29th October, by introducing myself and outlining my priorities. I asked for a meeting with Karen Kendrick, our Equality Lead to help me develop a plan for the year ahead, progress my abilities in writing reports and to work together to plan the Women of Today (WoT) event for 2020. I am organising the WoT event which is the biggest event I've organised to date. I've applied for courses over 2020 including Essential Skills so that I will be able to represent people if needed. I attended Alvescot for my Equality Rights part 1 course (9th-13th Sept) and met 3 like-minded women which started off my aim of creating a network of women. I set up a WhatsApp group so we could keep in touch, share information and advice. My first opportunity to meet women activists outside of the CWU was at the NAW weekend, which was educational and I also gained some new contacts. I enjoyed the NWTUC Equality Conference at Liverpool on the 2nd November where I met other women and made more new contacts! I've booked the Mechanics in March 2020 for the WoT event, I've got a rough agenda, the stalls are organised and just need to finalise one or two speakers. My next task is to organise a travel pack for the speakers and set up the invitations on Eventbrite. I feel that I am already well on my way to achieving my priorities for the year ahead and am looking forward to working with my Equality sisters and colleagues.

Sheila Biggins
NW Regional Women's Lead

Regional LGBT+ Lead Annual Report 2019

In the previous structure the North West Equality Committee had become quite a presence at the two largest Pride Events held in Manchester and Liverpool, which have been well supported by our branches, officers and members in 2019. I am looking forward to working with my Lead colleagues to bring aspects of LGBT+ knowledge into what they do and to learn more from them about their own strands.

My 3 priorities for 2020 are:

1. To build on the work that the national LGBT+ Advisory Committee had been doing,
2. Support as many Pride and LGBT+ events as possible,
3. Look at workplace policies and encouraging inclusivity for Transgender employees.

Looking forward I intend to ensure that the North West region carries on and builds upon the foundation that has already been set. It is important that realistic achievable goals are agreed. Our aim should be to be inclusive for all.

In the previous decade the CWU LGBT Advisory Committee (LGBTAC) campaigned to kick homophobia out of football but we have all seen in recent months that homophobia and racism are far from been kicked out of the grounds. In a YouGov survey of 2017, 43% of LGBT people felt that public sporting events were not

welcoming spaces for them. Stonewall's 'Make Sport Everyone's Game' through its Rainbow Laces campaign have made a good start in trying to tackle this. The campaign has a high profile and a large part of both sporting and non-sporting fans alike are aware of what the rainbow laces stand for. I would like to see the region fully support this campaign not only to continue but to grow and involve other campaigning organisations such as 'Just a Ball Game', and 'Give Racism the Red Card'. Through the region we can involve our branches, members and their children and especially if they are involved with sports or play in local teams. It will also be a great opportunity for the Regional Equality Leads to work together. I've secured funding to enable our region to be able to do this.

Referring to the Government Equalities LGBT Action Plan 2018, 68% of the respondents to the survey of which the report is based on, said that they avoided holding hands with their same sex partners in public for the fear of a negative reaction.

So, continuing with our support and participation in North West Pride events I would like us to take the theme of holding hands into them which also echoes the North West equality logo sentiment too. At whichever Pride events the region joins in with this year, I would like us all to hold hands when we march. As we have before we will encourage our loved ones, regardless of sexual orientation to hold their hands in solidarity with the LGBT+ community. I will also be looking that any promotional material prior to and on the Pride days reflect this and embrace our NW Equality logo.

Small steps forward together as one.

Cathryn Heath
NW Regional LGBT+ Lead