

CELEBRATING EQUALITY

A representatives' guide



■ January



Unite is committed to improving the working lives of our members, negotiating for equality at work and tackling discrimination are key issues for the union. Every worker should be entitled to equality of opportunity and to make the best use of their skills and talents regardless of their age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, identity, ethnic or national origin, marital status or religion.

By organising events and awareness around the issues that reflect the diversity of our membership, Unite is aware that we are able to engage the involvement of those members in our negotiating agenda at work.

We are also able to appeal to non members to join our union by creating the opportunity to explain the benefits of trade union membership.

This calendar of equality and diversity events can be used by Unite representatives and shop stewards to organise and promote equality in the workplace and in our communities. It tells you about the key dates and where to go to get support and information.

I hope that you will make use of it, start planning now and make 2008 a key year for promoting and advancing equality in your workplace.

Siobhan Endean
Head of Equalities

■ Unite equality e-mail networks

Unite e-mail networks were set up in 2006 so that members can receive regular e-mail updates on equality issues.

There are five networks consisting of Black and Minority Ethnic, Disabled, LGBT, Women and Young members. You can sign up for as many of these networks as you wish.

Don't miss out on being part of these networks which are playing an important role in sharing information on equality in Unite.

Sign up now. You can register at:
<http://www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=4217>

All your details will be maintained on a confidential basis by the Equality Department Administrator and will not be released to others, either within or outside of Unite.

ORGANISING ON EQUAL RIGHTS AT WORK

JANUARY 2008

- 1 New Year's Day - Secular
- 10 Mahayana New Year - Buddhist
- 19 Ashura - Islam
- 20 Al Hirja New Year - Islam
- 20 World Religion Day - Baha'i
- 27 Holocaust Memorial Day

FEBRUARY 2008

LGBT HISTORY MONTH

- 5 Shrove Tuesday - Christian
- 6 Ash Wednesday - Lent begins - Christian
- 7 Chinese New Year - Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist
- 14 St Valentine's Day - Christian
- 22 Work your Proper Hours Day

MARCH 2008

- 2 Mother's Day
- 8 International Women's Day
- 12-14 TUC Women's Conference, Eastbourne
- 21 Magha Puja Day
- 21 Feast of Naw-Ruz - New Year - Baha'i
- 21 Good Friday - Christian
- 23 Easter - Christian
- 28-30 TUC Young Members' Forum - Manchester

APRIL 2008

- 13 Baisakhi (Vaisakhi) - Sikh
- 18-20 TUC Black Workers' Conference, Eastbourne
- 20-27 Pesach (Passover) - Jewish
- 28 April Workers' Memorial Day

MAY 2008

- 1 May Day and Labour Day
- 17 May IDAHO International Day against Homophobia
- 17-18 Blackpool Pride
- 20 Buddha Day - Visakha Puja - Wesak - Buddhist
- 21-22 TUC Disability Conference, Congress House, London
- 24-26 Birmingham Pride
- 29 Ascension of Baha'u'llah - Baha'i

JUNE 2008

NATIONAL SURE START MONTH

- 7 Scottish Borders and Plymouth Pride
- 15 Father's Day
- 21 Summer Solstice
- 27-29 Glastonbury Festival
- 20-5 July Pride London Festival

JULY 2008

- 3-4 TUC LGBT Conference, Congress House, London
- 5 London Pride
- 6 His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Birthday - Buddhist
- 11-13 Bourne Free - Bournemouth
- 12 Oxford Pride
- 18 Asalha Puja Day - Dharma Day - Buddhist Brighton Pride
- Northern Pride, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- 25-3 August - EuroPride, Stockholm, Sweden

AUGUST 2008

- 3 Leeds Pride
- 9 Gloucestershire Rainbow Day
- 16 Swindon Pride
- 17 Doncaster Pride
- 15-25 Manchester Gay Pride Festival
- 23 International Slavery Remembrance day

SEPTEMBER 2008

- 2 Ramadan begins - Islam
- 4 Krishna Janmashtami - Hindu
- 6 Cardiff L&G Mardi Gras
- 30-1 October Rosh Hashanah - Jewish

OCTOBER 2008

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

- 2 Eid al Fitr (Ramadan ends) - Islam
- 9 Yom Kippur - Jewish
- 10 World Mental Health Day
- 28 Diwali (Deepavili) - Hindu, Sikh, Jain

NOVEMBER 2008

NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

- 7 National Ban Bullying at Work Day
- 24 Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib - Sikh
- 25 International day for the elimination of violence towards women

DECEMBER 2008

National Carers' Rights Day

- 1 World Aids Day
- 3 World Disability Day
- 9 Eid al Adha - Islam
- 10 International Human Rights Day
- 21 Winter Solstice
- 22-29 Hanukkah - Jewish
- 25 Christmas - Christian
- 26 St Stephen's Day - Christian
- 31 Hogmanay - Secular

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LGBT History Month

LGBT History Month is celebrated every year in February. It is an opportunity to organise events and publicise LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) history and equal rights campaigning in communities, including the workplace.

There is still much work to be done to combat homophobia and transphobia and to achieve equality in the workplace for LGBT workers. Unite has highlighted that many employers and workers are not aware of LGBT legal rights. Despite the legal advances, prejudice still persists and LGBT workers still face harassment, discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in the workplace.

So why not organise in the workplace in February around LGBT issues? Is your employer complying with the Regulations in this area? Do they have a well communicated and implemented equal opportunities policy? Do employees feel comfortable to “come out” in your workplace? If not then use LGBT History Month as an opportunity to start an Unite campaign to improve rights for LGBT employees in your workplace. The Unite Negotiators’ Guide on combating homophobia and achieving equality for LGBT workers advises representatives on how to go about doing this.

This is available on the Unite Equal Rights Website - <http://www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=3019> or contact your Regional Office for a copy in the post.

More information on LGBT History Month and events can be found at <http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/>.





Work your Proper Hours Day 22 February



“Work your Proper Hours Day” takes place on Friday, 22 February and is a campaign led by the trade unions to highlight the long hours’ culture in this country. It calls on all employees to remind their employers about the unpaid overtime that they do and to make sure that on this one day that they take a proper lunch break and go home on time.

The 22 February is the chosen date, because on average, if everyone in the UK who works unpaid overtime did all their unpaid work at the start of the year, this would be first day that they would get paid.

Tackling long hours and achieving better work-life balance for everyone are key issues for Unite. Many workers would like to reduce their working hours and have more access to flexible working.

So use this day to make members and employers aware of the problems caused by long working hours. These include sickness, stress and increased absenteeism.

Highlight the benefits of work-life balance to everyone such as increased productivity, improved staff morale and retention. This can be done in a number of ways with posters, leaflets and information on work-life balance and “Work Your Proper Hours Day”. Or hold an event or seminar on that day promoting work-life balance together with your employer. Check to see if your employer has a flexible working policy covering all employees. If so use the day to raise awareness of the policy. If not, then this is an area for Unite to begin negotiating on.

More information on Work-Life Balance can be found in the Unite Negotiators’ Guide on this issue at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equality> guides or contact your Unite Regional Officer for a copy in the post.

International Women's Day 8 March

International Women's Day is celebrated all over the world and in many countries it is designated as a national holiday. This is something that Unite is campaigning for as the UK has amongst the lowest bank holidays, alongside some of the longest working hours in Europe. We believe that a bank holiday on International Women's Day would celebrate and highlight the contribution that women have made and continue to make around the world.

We are also proud to be involved in international work to improve women's lives and rights across the world. There are many women, particularly in developing countries, who live in abject poverty with no access, for them or their children, to proper healthcare, a decent education or paid work.

If you would like to find out more about our International Campaigns please see <http://www.unitetheunion.com/international> solidarity. International Women's Day is a good opportunity to promote our international work in your workplace. You can talk to your Unite Officer about how to go about doing this.

Alternatively, you can use this day to highlight our Equal Pay Campaign. The full time gender pay gap is 17%, and the part-time gap is even worse at 38%. Unite believes that women have waited long enough for equal pay and that urgent action is required to address this.

To find out more about our Equal Pay Campaign see <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalpay>. More information on International Women's Day is available at <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/>



Unite – the union for young people

Young members may experience discrimination and lack of opportunities in the workplace due to stereotypical attitudes about young workers lacking the commitment and experience to carry out certain roles. They are also at increased risk of experiencing poor pay and conditions at work. Unite is committed to tackling these issues.

The Young Reps' Project, which ran from September to December 2007, resulted in Unite Young Members' Seminars being run in every region and we now have over 100 young people who are going to become more active in the union. This was a positive result as the union must get more young people active to ensure the future success of the union.

More than 90% of students work part-time while studying and Unite is encouraging students to join Unite and get involved whilst they are still at university. Students in full-time education can join for only £10 per year!!

We also run a number of campaigns and events aimed at encouraging young



people to get involved in Unite. This includes Love Music Hate Racism, the Unite Battle of the Bands and attending events such as the Glastonbury Festival.

To find out more see - <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=4264>

The Single Equality Act

The Government is introducing a Single Equality Act which is now required because of the lack of coherence and complexity of current equality legislation. The new Commission of Equality and Human Rights, which came into operation in October 2007, is going to find it difficult to function effectively if a Single Equality Act is not introduced.

Unite will be calling for the strengthening of the existing discrimination legislation, including compulsory equal pay audits for all employers, statutory equality representatives, the rights for trade unions to take class actions and the duty to promote equality across all strands and all sectors.

During the progress of the Bill we will be lobbying Government through our parliamentary group to ensure that the Bill reflects Unite priorities.

In advance of the Single Equality Act Unite Negotiators should ensure that their employer has a comprehensive Equal Opportunities Policy which is implemented in practice in the workplace.

An Unite guide on Negotiating on this issue is available at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides> or from your Unite Regional Office.

Pride Events

The TUC LGBT Conference and London Pride take place in July. However, as you can see from the Calendar, Pride events take place all round the country and can involve a parade, march, rally, arts events and other activities for people who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans.

Unite is proud to support and take part in London Pride, but we also support many other Pride events around the country, so if you are a member and would like to go along to a local Pride event, contact your Unite Regional Officer or Office to see if Unite is supporting it and better still get involved in supporting it.

Contact details for your Regional Office are at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/regions>

More information on LGBT rights, campaigning and Pride events are available at <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=3019>

National Sure Start Month

Sure Start is the government programme to deliver the best start in life for every child. It brings together, early education, childcare, health and family support.

National Sure Start Month takes place in June every year and brings together thousands of parents, children, early years, and health and family services to promote Sure Start and highlight the importance of every child having an equal and best start in life.

More details on the National Sure Start Month can be found at <http://www.nationalsurestartmonth.com/home.asp>

Why not use this campaign as a platform for better support from your employer for parents and children. Does your employer provide childcare vouchers? Do they allow employees flexibility at work to help out with childcare? Are parents where you work aware of their rights and policies in this area? If not then it is an opportunity to let members know their rights and start negotiating with employers to provide better policies and benefits for parents.

For more information see the Unite Negotiators' Guide on Work-Life Balance which is also available by post from your Regional Office <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides>



Religion or belief in the workplace

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations came into force in December 2003, since when it has become unlawful to discriminate against workers because of a religious or similar belief.

Who is protected by the regulations?

The Regulations covers all workers, including agency and contract workers, office holders, the police, barristers and members of the armed forces. It applies to all aspects of employment and vocational training, including recruitment, promotion, transfers, dismissals and training.



What protection is provided by the regulations?

It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief as follows:

- directly discriminate against an individual which is to treat a worker less favourably than another because of their religion or belief. There is no defence for direct discrimination, however, in narrow circumstances there are exemptions in relation to genuine occupational requirements:
- indirectly discriminate against an individual by applying a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular religion or belief unless it can be objectively justified:
- subject someone to harassment. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- victimise an individual because they have made or intend to make a complaint or allegation or have given or intend to give evidence under the regulations.



Exemptions may be made in very limited circumstances if there is a genuine occupational requirement for the worker to be of a particular religion or belief in order to do the job or to comply with the organisation's ethos in relation to religion or belief.

What is the definition of religion or belief?

Religion or belief is defined as being any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. This does not include any philosophical or political belief unless it is similar to religious belief.

Age Discrimination Regulations

The Age Discrimination Regulations came into force on 1 October 2006 and it is now unlawful for employers to discriminate against someone at work on the basis of their age, unless it can be objectively justified.

Unite has published a Negotiator's Guide on Age Discrimination which gives information and advice on negotiating on age and on the legislation itself.

A copy is available at the Unite Equal Rights website, <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides> or you can contact your Unite Regional Officer or Office for a copy.



International Slavery Remembrance Day 23 August

This day was chosen to remember the horrors of slavery as on the 23 August 1791, an uprising of the enslaved Africans on the island of St Domingo (modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic) began. This revolt was a crucial event in the fight against slavery. UNESCO chose this date as a reminder that enslaved Africans were the main agents of their own liberation.

On this day we remember those slaves who fought for their freedom and organised themselves despite the overwhelming forces ranged against them.

The rich industrialised nations owe a debt to those countries still scarred by the legacy of slavery, especially Africa and the West Indies.

We must not forget that slavery still exists. The horror of people trafficking needs to be stamped out. We need a fairer system of immigration to allow people access to our country without the need for them to resort to criminal gangs for help. We need to give victims the confidence to 'blow the whistle' about their unfair treatment without the threat of deportation and finally, we need to work together to continue to tackle racism.

The Unite Negotiators' Guide on Race Equality is available at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides>

■ September

There are a number of days coming up surrounding disability in the next three months so September is a good time to starting organising around these events in the workplace.

There are 1 million disabled people who do not have a job who want to work so use the days as a chance to promote disability equality and rights.

World Mental Health Day takes place on 10 October. People with mental health illness have the lowest employment rates of all impairment categories, with only 20% in work. This day is a good opportunity to highlight to members employers' obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act in respect of mental health issues and to promote Unite Disability Equality Champions.

More information on World Mental Health Day is available at the Mental Health Foundation's website <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/wmhd/>. For information on Unite Disability Champions refer to www.disabilitychampions.com

Around forty million people are living with HIV throughout the world - and that number increases in every region every day. In the UK alone, more than 60,000 people are living with HIV and more than 7,000 more are diagnosed every year. Ignorance and prejudice are fuelling the spread of a preventable disease.

World AIDS Day, 1 December is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV and AIDS. More information on the Day is available at <http://www.worldaidsday.org/index.asp>

World Disability Day on 3 December is a day to celebrate the achievements of disabled people and to campaign for improvements in rights for disabled people throughout the world. Only 50% of disabled people of working age are in employment in this country, compared to 81% of non-disabled people and many disabled people who do work find they are confined to jobs for which they are over-qualified and have no hope of

progressing. And remember many people develop a disability whilst they are at work so it can affect anyone.

It is important that Unite Representatives ensure that employers are complying with the Disability Discrimination Act, have a comprehensive and effective equal opportunities policy that covers disability and that disabled members are aware of their rights at work.

More information on Negotiating on Disability Equality is available at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides> or contact your Regional Office or Officer.



Black History Month

Black History Month is held every October in Britain. The aims are to:

- Promote knowledge of Black History and experience
- Disseminate information on positive Black contributions to British Society
- Heighten the confidence and awareness of Black people in their cultural heritage

2007 was a special year in Black History as it marked 200 years since the abolition of slavery in what was then the British Empire and there were many events held to commemorate this event.

There is still much to do in this country to achieve equality for Black and minority ethnic people (BME). Many are still facing persistent disadvantage, discrimination and bullying and harassment at work.

So use October as the month to promote Black history and race equality at work.

More information on Black History Month is available at <http://www.black-history-month.co.uk/>

The Unite Negotiators' Guide on Race Equality is also available at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides>



Dignity at Work

The 7 November marks National Ban Bullying at Work Day and National Stress Awareness Day. Both are good opportunities to promote the importance of Dignity at Work.

Bullying is a widespread and serious problem and one which none of us can afford to ignore. It can lead to terrible consequences for employees, organisations and the economy as a whole.

The Dignity at Work Project is headed up by Unite and is the world's largest anti-bullying project, made possible thanks to just under £1million worth of funding from the Department of Trade and Industry. The Project's aim is to encourage employee representatives and employers to build cultures in which

respect for individuals is regarded as an essential part of the conduct of all those who work in the organisation.

The Project is increasing awareness and knowledge of 'dignity at work' issues, and encouraging the development of partnership working in the workplace through the promotion of joint working on dignity at work. More information on the Project is available at the website - <http://www.dignityatwork.org/>

Unite's Health and Safety Website gives advice and information on stress at work <http://www.unitetheunion.com/stress>.

Details of National Ban Bullying at Work Day can be found at the Andrea Adams Trust <http://www.andreaadamstrust.org/>



International day for the elimination of violence against women - 25 November 2008

Domestic violence accounts for a quarter of all recorded violent crime in England and Wales and is the largest single type of violence against women. At least one in four women will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives.

Some people would consider that domestic violence is not an issue for Unite and has little to do with the workplace. However, it is likely that the problems surrounding domestic violence will eventually surface at work. It is impossible for many women to leave the fear of violence and abuse behind when at work which can affect their ability to work.

A well publicised domestic violence policy at work could help women in this situation and Unite's Negotiators' Guide on Well-Being at Work gives information and advice on negotiating such a policy with an employer. This day can also be used by Unite representatives to highlight the issue to members. The guide is available at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides>.

National Carers' Rights Day

National Carers' Rights Day is held in December to highlight the issues surrounding caring in this country. With an ageing population more people are finding themselves caring for relatives and it is becoming a huge issue for individuals, the government and the economy. Many carers feel that they are not getting enough support from either the government or at work.

In April 2007 the Work and Families Bill introduced the right for carers to ask to work flexibly to better enable employees to balance caring and work. It is important that Unite members are aware of this right and that employers have a work-life balance policy which gives all employees the right to request flexible working and that it is implemented in practice.

More information on work-life balance is available in the Unite Negotiators' Guide on this issue which is available at <http://www.unitetheunion.com/equalityguides>.

Carers' UK campaigns and provides information for Carers, together with events taking place on National Carers' Rights Day - <http://www.carersuk.org/Home>.

