



Amicus

Equalities Strategy

The Amicus Policy Conference 2005 agreed that Amicus would develop a work plan covering policy and service delivery with regards to equalities.

This strategy has been agreed by the National Executive Council and is to be implemented through consultation with the Amicus Equality Committees, the National Sector Committees, Regional Councils and political structures. The National Executive Council will also agree and publish an annual Amicus Equalities Report.

Equality for Amicus members is about ensuring all workers have the ability to fulfil their potential, have fair recognition of the contribution they make and the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work.

Amicus recognises that the presence of a strong trade union, which negotiates wages and conditions for all workers is the only way to tackle discrimination, exploitation and low pay suffered by part time, agency and migrant workers.

The equality strategy is about organising and recruiting a diverse membership who are empowered to become workplace reps and equality reps that are enabled to negotiate fairness in the workplace.

Equality of both opportunity and outcome at work will only be achieved by a collective Amicus organisation that negotiates change in the workplace. This strategy sets out the negotiating agenda that seeks to tackle the barriers and discrimination that affect women, younger and older workers LGBT, black and ethnic minority and disabled workers and the agenda to promote equality at work.

The Amicus equality strategy then sets out the need for a single equality act and welfare agenda that supports equality in the workplace.

The Amicus Equality Strategy finally sets out the global solidarity agenda to campaign against exploitation and discrimination of workers wherever we live, in recognition of the global economy and global employers.

The attached document outlines the strategy with regards to developing the industrial and policy equality agenda in Amicus in order to implement the policy set by Amicus Policy Conference and ensure that the equalities strategy is mainstreamed in the delivery of the union's services to activists and members.

The consultation on implementing the strategy is being carried out at meetings of all committees of the union who are requested to develop their own action plan with particular relevance to their sector or region.

Delivery of the Amicus equalities strategy is the responsibility of all departments, regions and sectors of the union in cooperation with the Head of Equalities who has overall management responsibility to ensure mainstreaming and implementation of the strategy.

Please complete the questionnaire at the back of this document to have your say, and outline what you will be doing to contribute to the Amicus equalities strategy.

Siobhan Endean
Head of Equalities
Amicus the Union

Amicus Equalities Strategy Consultation Document

The outlined strategy below is aimed at supporting workplace reps through providing information, training and campaigning techniques in developing the equalities agenda in the workplace.

Your comments are welcomed, please email your responses to bridget.clemson@amicustheunion.org or provide your comments verbally at the meeting where this document has been tabled on the agenda, or by post to Bridget Clemson, Amicus, 35 King Street, London WC2E 8JG.

ORGANISING AND RECRUITMENT

The Amicus equality agenda is a key opportunity to recruit and organise a wider audience of members in organised work places. Office staff, apprentices, temporary and agency workers, part time workers and migrant workers are all likely to be keen to join Amicus as a union that stands up for their rights. As well as reaching these new members in the work place through our "Respect at Work" recruitment material, Amicus can reach more diverse members through campaigning in the community and in unorganised workplaces.

Amicus is working to develop its recruitment and organising campaigns in universities and colleges through engagement with the national union of students and our activists who work in higher education.

This organising agenda could be expanded upon by sectors and regions to develop relationships between the union and schools, further education colleges and job centre plus to reach out to young people in education and apprenticeships to recruit them to the union.

Working in conjunction with the union's life long learning team, the Amicus equalities strategy also provides a focus on the skills agenda, to work with employers to deliver quality apprenticeships and adult apprenticeships focusing on encouraging women, disabled, and black and minority ethnic, young and older workers in to non traditional areas.

There are many community based events that celebrate diversity where Amicus already has major sponsorship and involvement, for example the Scottish Women's Football Association, local authority Diversity Festivals and Pride. Amicus can develop its presence at all these events and other campaign events such as the Battle of the Bands and Love Music Hate Racism events as an opportunity to recruit and retain new members.

BUILDING ACTIVIST BASE

The Women and Work Commission report announced capacity building funding through the Union Modernisation Fund for Equality Reps in the workplace.

Amicus policy is to develop trained equality reps who are workplace reps and part of the Amicus negotiating committee in the workplace.

The Disability Champions project has led to over 300 activists who are now registered as champions and in the process of receiving training on negotiating disability access to work.

Regional Councils have the function of organising education for activists including training on equality issues which can be provided through a network of trained tutors overseen by the education dept and the Head of Equality.

These education courses focus on building negotiating and campaigning skills as well as in depth understanding of equality legislation and the role of the workplace equality representative.

Equality Campaign Networks for lgbt, bme, disabled, young and women members are being developed through the organising and recruitment campaigns and through engagement in the website and equality forums. These networks are coordinated centrally by the Head of Equality, with regular email updates through the e-equality newsletter.

These campaign networks are focused on campaigning activity, whether that be our anti racism campaigns, international solidarity campaigns or workplace issues, to encourage involvement and participation.

The Equality Structures have elected new Regional and National Equality Committees who provide an important focus for consultation on the equality strategy of the union.

Negotiating Equality in the Work Place

EQUAL PAY

Equal Pay is a priority campaign for Amicus as the persistent gap in pay between men and women full time workers is 17% and is not closing at a significant rate. The pay gap for part time workers is 38% and is in urgent need of addressing as there has been little progress on closing this gap in recent years.

The Amicus Equal Pay Campaign is focused on carrying out equal pay audits, job evaluation where necessary and delivering fair pay and transparent pay systems in organisations. In doing so we can identify pay discrimination, occupational segregation and work with employers to develop action plans to close the gender pay gap and achieve equality for women workers.

The Women and Work Commission report provided 40 recommendations to close the gender pay gap. Amicus was disappointed that the report did not recommend reform of the equal pay act to include mandatory pay audits or statutory rights for equality reps in the work place.

The Amicus Equal Pay Campaign aims to take these 40 recommendations to employers and negotiate equal pay agreements that will be effective in closing the pay gap.

The resources available to Amicus activists to support this campaign are the Amicus Equal Pay Negotiators' guide and postcards. The Amicus education department can arrange reps training on equal pay and all regional officers have recently received training in this area. The head of equalities and research officer are available to support, advise and speak on the campaign.

Activists are requested to feed back good practice on equal pay to the research officer for equalities to ensure that this is disseminated throughout the union and aids negotiation on equal pay in the workplace.

If employers refuse to carry out pay audits then we can provide evidence to the Discrimination Law Review that the Single Equality Act needs to introduce mandatory equal pay audits for the public, private and not-for-profit sectors as many employers will not take action on equal pay unless they are compelled to do so by law.

AGE DISCRIMINATION

The Age Discrimination Regulations came into force on 1 October 2006 from which date employers cannot discriminate against workers on the grounds of age in the provision of terms and conditions of employment, retirement, workplace benefits, recruitment, promotion and training.

Amicus must ensure that employers are implementing the Regulations correctly and that members are aware of their new rights under this legislation.

In order to support this a negotiators' guide on age discrimination at work is being published. This details the workplace issues on age discrimination, how to negotiate in the workplace and the legal framework.

Training will be provided by Amicus for officers and workplace reps on the legal framework of the age discrimination regulations.

Activists are requested to feed back good practice on age in the workplace to the research officer for equalities to ensure that this is disseminated throughout the union and aids negotiations on age in the workplace.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women's Aid Federation estimates that, on average, women are assaulted 35 times before complaining to the police. Fear, economic dependency, lack of alternative housing and concerns about disrupting children's lives often restrain women from escaping the situation. Domestic violence affects, and can completely overshadow, the lives of those who are experiencing it.

It might seem that this has little to do with the workplace. However, it is quite likely that the problems surrounding domestic violence will eventually surface at work.

Job performance can be affected and may result in disciplinary action. This means that job prospects and security may be threatened. The effects of domestic violence may show themselves in poor timekeeping, frequent sickness, or the inability to be flexible about working hours. For instance a woman suffering domestic violence may have to keep to a rigid timetable about hours of work and never socialising after work.

Women who move house due to domestic violence have a range of issues with regards to confidentiality, safety and financial security. Often the only method that a violent partner can retain contact with a woman who has left a violent situation is through the workplace, security with regards to personal information and alternative arrangements with regards to pay can greatly assist, and the decision to leave a violent partner can be influenced if a woman is aware that there is a workplace policy on domestic violence.

WELL-BEING AT WORK AND PROMOTING EQUALITY

In order to deliver equality in the workplace there needs to be a framework of employment practice which reflects the social, cultural and physical barriers that prevent full participation of all Amicus members.

In the public sector there is a general duty to promote race equality and there will shortly be similar duties to promote gender and disability equality. Amicus policy is that this duty should also be extended to all private and voluntary sector companies and organisations, and all strands of equality.

Long working hours, in unsafe, inaccessible workplaces, where harassment and bullying are allowed to flourish all go to prevent wellbeing and therefore equality at work.

Amicus has developed a Negotiators guide for Equality in the work place that provides a step by step practical guide to delivering a fully mainstreamed equal opportunities policy. There are also negotiators guides on work life balance, dignity at work and campaigning against homophobia and racism at work.

Guides on disability access and women's health and safety will shortly be produced.

Campaigning for Equality

SINGLE EQUALITIES ACT

The Government has set up the Discrimination Law Review to make recommendations on introducing a single equality act which is now required because of the lack of coherence and complexity of current equality legislation.

Amicus will be responding to the consultation which is expected early in 2007 and will be calling for the strengthening of the existing 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. This will form the basis of our on going equalities campaigning nationally.

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

DWP WELFARE REFORM

The Government consulted earlier this year on its plans on Welfare Reform and Empowering People to Work. Amicus responded to this emphasising that it should not be about cutting disabled people's benefits, but about expanding on the success of Pathways to Work and removing the barriers and discrimination faced by disabled people. Without this disabled people will not have equal access to employment and will continue to be discriminated against at work.

The Bill has been published and during its progress we will be lobbying Government through our parliamentary group, working with other stakeholders such as voluntary organizations and other unions to ensure that the Bill reflects Amicus's priorities in relation to disabled people in their access and opportunities in the labour market.

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Amicus is campaigning through its global solidarity agenda to end the exploitation and discrimination of workers throughout the world in recognition of the global economy and global employers. We are also affiliated to the International Trade Secretariats which bring together unions internationally.

The Zimbabwe, Western Sahara, Columbia, Africa Matters and celebrating International Women's Day as a bank holiday campaigns are all of interest to young, women and black and minority members and we are encouraging activists and members to become actively involved. These campaigns are also being used to recruit new members and activists.

How can you help?

The purpose of this consultation is ensure that the Amicus equalities strategy is as affective as possible in creating positive change in the workplace and in society in general. For this we need your help. The strategy needs to be informed by the experience of members and activists if it is to have any resonance in the wider community.

So we need to know your experiences of campaigning and bargaining on equalities issues. We need to hear about your successes and your disappointments. Most importantly we need to know what obstacles stand in our way in our fight for equality in the workplace. So if resources are not available to help you then tell us, if your employer is resistant to equality issues tell us that and if your workmates are not interested in equalities issues tell us why and how you think we can help you change that.

The floor is yours; you can answer the questions below or just use them as a guide to form your contribution.

Please email your comments to bridget.clemson@amicustheunion.org or send by post to Bridget Clemson, Amicus, 35 King Street, London WC2E 8JG – we look forward to hearing from you.

QUESTIONS

1. ORGANISING AND RECRUITMENT

What opportunities are there to recruit a wider diversity of members in your community?

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What opportunities are there to recruit a wider diversity of members in your workplace?

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QUESTIONS

What resources would assist you in recruiting apprentices and young people to the union?

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What activities and campaigns will you carry out to recruit new members to Amicus?

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QUESTIONS

2. BUILDING ACTIVIST BASE

How would equality reps work in your region/sector?

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What training can be provided to workplace reps to develop understanding of equality issues?

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QUESTIONS

3. EQUAL PAY

Would your company or organisation benefit from policies on procurement, outsourcing and corporate social responsibility that reflect the aspirations of the Women and Work Commission report to tackle the gender pay gap?

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What sectors, companies and organisations will you target to carry out equal pay audits?

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Would it be useful to develop a charter for women workers in your sector or region which employers would sign up to work in partnership with Amicus to take action to close the gender pay gap, what would that charter include?

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QUESTIONS

5. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Does your company have a policy on domestic violence?

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Would an Amicus negotiators guide on domestic violence assist in your ability to negotiate a policy?

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Would you welcome training on this issue?

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QUESTIONS

6. WELL-BEING AT WORK AND PROMOTING EQUALITY

What are the issues in your region or sector with regards to well being and promoting equality at work?

What other resources and training would you like to see from Amicus to assist in promoting well being and equality at work?

Do you have company policies on these issues that deliver decent working conditions for our members? If so please can you send copies to Karen.Cole@amicustheunion.org or by post to Karen Cole, Amicus, 63 Macrae Road, Ham Green, Bristol, BS20 0DD.



QUESTIONS

7. NEGOTIATING FOR EQUALITY

Have you tried to run any campaigns in your workplace based on equalities issues?

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If not, what has prevented you from doing so? Resources, information, training, confidence, other?

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What are the issues in your region or sector with regards to well being and promoting equality at work?

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Name.....

Address.....
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Contact number.....

Email address.....

Work place.....



X

Please post completed survey to Bridget Clemson, Amicus, 35 King Street, London WC2E 8JG
or email to bridget.clemson@amicustheunion.org
Additional copies of this document are also available from Bridget Clemson

