

## Where's the diversity?

**B**T urgently needs to step up its efforts to step up recruitment from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities so it becomes more reflective of the communities it operates in.

That was the unanimous verdict from delegates at the CWU's Telecoms & Financial Services Conference in April in response to an impassioned plea by Eddie Beese of Great Western Branch for the union to "campaign vigorously" to ensure that the company's recruitment policies reach out to the BAME community.

Insisting the diversity deficit was stark in his Bristol workplace, Eddie told Conference: "Every day when I reach my workplace I leave diversity behind. It's like going into Dr Who's tardis and being transported back in time to the 1960s and 70s.

"You walk into the yard and see the engineers – all predominantly white men. I see the apprentices – all predominantly white young men. I go into the Openreach Centre of Excellence and, guess what, the workforce is all white. When I leave

work in the evening I step back out of the tardis and am transported back to 2018 and am surrounded by diversity again."

Eddie continued: "BT's advertising and publicity portrays a company that is diverse...but it's a fact that its recruitment policy is flawed and not reaching out to the BAME community. It seems to me that existing employees referring a friend or family member is only producing more of the same – the next generation of a predominantly white workforce."

Supporting the motion, Winston Richards of Greater London Combined said he was "sad but not surprised" to hear of the situation in Bristol. "This is something that's going on, not just in

BT, but in other organisations nationally," he stressed.

Suggesting that the company could easily get in touch with local community groups and reconsider where job vacancies are advertised, Winston argued that "positive action does have a role to play, especially where you identify areas where there are deficiencies."

Bill Martin of Leicester & Midshires Branch agreed, citing a pointed lack of diversity he'd spotted himself amongst new Openreach recruits going through induction sessions at Yarnfield Park.

Supporting the motion on behalf of the T&FS Executive, Ken Woolley insisted the CWU was already on the case. "We've raised concerns on numerous

occasions and both BT and Openreach accept they need to do a lot better," Ken told Conference.

"It's not just about BAME – they're also trying to get female recruitment up as well, especially in Openreach."



More at [www.cwu.org/diversity/](http://www.cwu.org/diversity/)

## Stepping up the fight against racism

A successful motion from the union's Black Workers' Conference instructed the Executive to step up our union's work challenging racism in the workplace via several specific points for action:

- ◆ Supporting the Show Racism the Red Card (SRRC) "Wear Red Day"
- ◆ Encouraging fund-raising

for SRRC to deliver anti-racism education across the country

- ◆ Circulating anti-racist material to CWU-recognised workplaces – including the TUC's Guide to Combatting Racism in the Workplace
- ◆ Working with the TUC Race Relations Committee and other like-minded

organisations to question as to whether trade unions need collective bargaining on race issues.

Moved by Sajid Shaikh of Birmingham & District Amal, the proposition was strongly supported in debate by several speakers, including Ryan Rochester, from Coventry Branch, who described racism as "a mental disorder."

Tom Cooper, speaking on behalf of the CWU Executive, also backed the motion, asking Conference to give it full backing.

And South Central Postal Branch delegate Prince Kingsley Faborode summed up the feelings of the hall, when he said: "We need to keep on fighting and one day we will see an end to racism."

# Women make waves in Bournemouth

**Gloucestershire Amal Branch activist Holly Bate made a successful debut at Annual Conference this year, when the motion she moved was overwhelmingly approved by delegates.**

Holly introduced the same proposition that she had put forward at last November's CWU Women's Conference, which instructed the union's Executive to carry out annual equality audits of branches.

This measure, she explained, would provide valuable data to the national leadership on the amounts of money being spent on equality activities and would therefore, she argued, be an accurate indication of the amount of work being done by each branch in this area.

At November's Bristol event, Holly's motion had been opposed by the Women's Advisory Committee, who urged delegates to vote against the proposition and wait for this matter to be addressed via the CWU's Re-design project.



Trish Lavelle

The show of hands on that occasion had been too close to call, sparking the first-ever card vote at a CWU Women's Conference. The card vote recorded a narrow win for the resolution, which was then selected to come to Annual Conference.

Speaking after that decision, Holly said she was "very pleased to win the vote," but admitted that, as a first-time speaker, she had been "really, really nervous" making her speech.

"Now you've got to move it at General Conference in April," her branch colleague told her, to which she said that she would be even more nervous speaking there for the first time.

However, when Annual Conference came around, Holly had overcome her apprehension and made a confident speech moving the proposition to the several hundred-strong audience.

Responding on behalf of the CWU Executive, CWU head of education & training Trish Lavelle stressed that, while the leadership fully agreed with the spirit and the intentions of the motion, it had decided to formally oppose it because of scepticism as to whether expenditure audits were the best means to increase equality engagement.

She added that the Executive shared the concerns expressed

on branch equality under-engagement, but that this would be better addressed as part of the Re-design project.

In her right to reply, Holly thanked Trish and the other contributors to the debate and took on board the supportive comments made, but asked Conference, nonetheless, to pass the proposition.

"On Equality Day, please support this equality motion," she urged, winning an enthusiastic round of applause, followed by a substantial endorsement by show of hands.

"I'm really happy this motion has gone through," she commented after the vote, "I think this will make a real positive difference."



Holly Bate

## Conference also approved important motions on period poverty & training for branch women's officers

**The first of these motions – which came from the 2017 Women's Conference – highlighted the pilot project by the devolved Scottish Parliament offering free sanitary provision to women and girls on low incomes and instructed the CWU Executive to campaign for similar pilot schemes to be introduced across the UK, describing this as "the first step to help**

**provide sensitive and dignified solutions to make these products easily accessible to those who need them."**

And the other proposition noted that branch women's officers need appropriate IR training so the union can be fully in compliance with the existing policy that female members should have the right to representation by a woman if requested.

That motion, which came from the South West Region Committee, instructed the Executive to "produce a report to establish what barriers women's officers are coming up against in obtaining appropriate training to represent their members, and a plan to rectify this to be produced by October 2018 and presented at CWU Women's Conference."





Marking Equality Day in Bournemouth directly after the Equalities fringe meeting

# 'Lesbians & Gays Support the Miners was a game changer for us'

A guest speaker from the celebrated 1980s solidarity movement **Lesbians & Gays Support the Miners (LGSM)** attracted an audience of 100 delegates to a packed Equalities fringe meeting during Conference week.

Jane Connor, from LGSM gave a fascinating insight into the work of the movement, telling the room: "I'm sure you all know the history of *Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners* and if you don't, watch the film *Pride!* It's pretty accurate – with the occasional taking of poetic licence."

There had been a small, but growing movement for gay rights in the trade unions and Labour Party from the mid 1970s, she explained, adding that much of this history had been set out in Peter Purton's excellent book *Champions of Equality – Trade Unions*

and LGBT rights in Britain.

In 1976, the Gay Liberation Front organised a conference as part of the Gay Working People's Campaign attended by 50 people – a quarter of them women – and there were also members of the Union of Postal Workers at this event.

A Civil Service Gay Group was established in 1977, and a year later the Gay Post and Telecom Workers Group was launched. One of the issues it took up was the harassment of male telephonists, who regardless of whether they were gay or not, were ridiculed and name called.

But it was the support of the NUM at the 1985 Labour Party and TUC conferences in 1985 that was a game changer for lesbian and gay rights within the trade union movement.

The meeting was jointly chaired by CWU women's advisory committee vice-chair Vicki Turner and her fellow committee member Laura Snell.

Laura said that Jane had been "great," and that "it was brilliant to see so many people at our Equalities fringe meeting."

"The audience was fascinated to hear that she was part of the choir that sang the song in the film *Pride!*" Laura added.

At the end of the film, the audience was invited to take part in a photo-shoot on the steps of the Conference venue, the BIC.

Everyone was wearing their specially commissioned Equality Day t-shirts and they held aloft a Free Ahem Tamimi, banner, to give an international gesture of solidarity to the young Palestinian activist recently jailed by Israeli authorities.

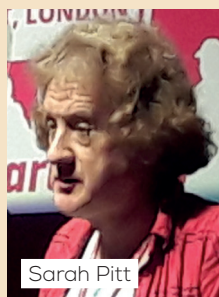
## Fighting to end discrimination against transgender people

**Sarah Pitt, from Eastern No.4 Branch, won applause from delegates when calling for support for a motion from the union's LGBT Conference "deploring" discrimination against transgendered people.**

The proposition noted the announcement of a formal consultation by the Government on reviewing the Gender Recognition Act (2004) and instructed the CWU Executive to "support a model of gender reassignment

so that trans people are not reliant on a medical diagnosis of illness and a lengthy derogatory process before they are recognised for who they are."

Our leadership was further instructed to support the right for people to be acknowledged as "gender non-binary at work and in wider society" and to "maintain



Sarah Pitt

monitoring at work and in society that can help identify discrimination against women and men."

And the "right of all women (including trans women) to continue accessing safe spaces, such as domestic violence agencies and rape crisis centres" must also be supported.

The motion was moved by

Jason Reynolds on behalf of the LGBT Advisory Committee, as it had initially been adopted at last November's CWU LGBT conference and was then selected to go to General Conference.

Speaking on behalf of the CWU Executive, head of education & training Trish Lavelle urged delegates to approve the proposition, which she said, was in line with the union's existing equalities policy.



# CWU puts disabled access to sports stadiums in the spotlight

More must be done to measure the progress being made in making sports stadiums across the country more accessible and welcoming to disabled sports fans, the TUC's annual Disabled Workers' Conference has agreed.

Unanimously supporting a motion tabled by the CWU, delegates from across the trade union movement attending last month's Conference have committed the TUC Disability Committee to draw up a detailed report with the help of the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and the disability campaigning group Level Playing Field, amongst others.

Proposing the motion, CWU Disability Advisory Committee member Peter Sharrocks pointed out that, although the PFA has been working hard to try to improve matters for disabled football fans, some clubs have done more than others, and access to some



Peter Sharrocks

stadiums, as well as where disabled fans are positioned, "often leaves them feeling completely short-changed or at worst humiliated."

Stressing that "sometimes very simple changes which do not cost much make a huge difference to disabled fans' experience", Peter congratulated clubs such as Arsenal, Brighton, Everton

and Derby for the progress they have made.

In some other stadiums, however, the situation remains "horrific", leading Peter to conclude: "Given the obscene amounts of money being poured into the Premier League, those clubs simply have no excuse not to make their grounds as disability-friendly as possible."

*It's 'plane' not good enough!*

In recent weeks there have been a number of reports about people with disabilities being forced to wait for help to un-board a plane, get on a train or just to use a bus, writes Disability Advisory Committee member Mark Bastiani.

In one instance, BBC journalist Frank Gardner, [right] a wheelchair user, was unhappy at the treatment that he received at Heathrow Airport having returned from a reporting assignment in Ethiopia.



It transpired that his wheelchair, which should have been left by the plane door, had been mistakenly transported into the terminal, leaving Frank stranded on-board for two hours after the rest of the passengers had disembarked.

An airport spokesperson apologised, saying the incident would be looked into - but, tweeting, Frank said he was "utterly sick" of it repeatedly happening when he lands at Heathrow.

Heathrow CEO John Holland-Kaye subsequently told BBC Radio 5 Live that he "didn't think it reasonable that we should take financial responsibility" for compensation in such instances, arguing that services at airports are provided by many partners.

## Mental health crisis in schools

**A resolution committing the union to work with and support the education unions in tackling the growing problem of mental health issues among school-age children was unanimously adopted by Conference.**

The motion had been passed at the CWU Disability Conference last year and was then selected for submission to General Conference 2018. Moved by Maxine Cartwright on behalf of the union's Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), the proposition cited research by the Association of School and College Leaders

(ASCL) and the concerns sparked by the results of its membership survey of mental health issues in schools.

According to the key points of the ASCL study:

- ◆ 79% of school heads reported an increase in self-harm among students
- ◆ 40% said that instances of cyber bullying had risen
- ◆ 53% rated their local child and adolescent mental health services as either "poor" or "very poor"
- ◆ 80% called for these services to be urgently improved and expanded.

Further articles by DAC

members on the subject of mental health can be viewed online.

- ◆ Jonathan Bellshaw gives advice for members with mental health issues undergoing performance management processes at [www.cwu.org/news/mental-health-management/](http://www.cwu.org/news/mental-health-management/)
- ◆ Tony Pedal gives his personal view as to how we all have a part to play in improving the way in which mental health issues are dealt with within Royal Mail, [www.cwu.org/news/mental-health-in-rm](http://www.cwu.org/news/mental-health-in-rm)