

UNISON *Aberdeenshire*

Equality Matters

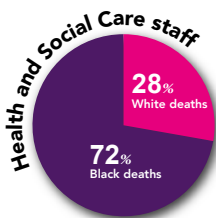
Dealing with stress during the Covid crisis

It is likely that most of us will have felt under some kind of stress lately with the change in our lives created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sometimes we see stress coming, for instance moving house or starting a new job, but we may not have completely understood we were entering into a new kind of life when March began. It has been one of the most stressful times that the country has had in a long time. And of course it comes with major equalities impacts.

UNISON assistant general secretary Christina McAnea said: "Our members - women, black members, disabled members and LGBT+ members are on the front line of the pandemic."

We have heard many reports on the news about how Black communities have been affected disproportionately. In UNISON we have a very large number of



members in social care and we know that many of them are Black and migrant workers.

The majority are under paid and under valued and yet through this pandemic and always are doing vital caring roles. 72% of all health and social care staff who have died with COVID-19 are Black. And Black households are almost twice as likely to report having lost income and jobs.

Workers under the age of 35 are more likely to have been made unemployed or furloughed than older colleagues

For disabled people the question seems to be shielded or not; vulnerable or not -

who decides? I recall Nicola Surgeon the First Minister saying the shielded group numbers were lower than expected and I do wonder if more disabled people should have been classed in this group than has been.

There seems to be much confusion in the area as disabled people aren't necessarily ill but Covid19 could impact their other disabilities and chronic health issues. If they are shielding this could cause more anxiety, loneliness, depression and more stress, particularly when some were not prepared for isolation away from loved ones on top of the challenges presented by their disabilities.

Some disabled members



People have mental health problems each year

have reasonable adjustments at their workplace for their disabilities which they weren't able to take home. So they are trying to improvise which could do them more harm.

It is important to note that the government has been very clear that the household isolation instruction not to go out does not apply if you are required to leave home due to domestic violence.

The pandemic affects older people more and those over 70 are especially vulnerable. With people having to work longer this has implications for them and is also a serious concern for our retired members.

All this adds to the stress that affects our members who are in one of the above groups.



One of the best ways to improve stress is to have a work-life balance and this is incredibly important for all of us. We all really must ensure after Coronavirus that we maintain a work-life balance and I hope you have during it as well.

For those of us working at home, we may find ourselves somehow having the feeling of not escaping from our workplace and we need to be really disciplined with ourselves.

Please remember that the branch also has a Branch Welfare Officers Ann Gray who is here to help. Ann can be contact by phone at 07919 392101 or by email: ann.gray@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

UNISON also has its own charity for members "THERE FOR YOU" <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you> Should you wish to discuss anything with them, leave your details by telephone or email and they will call you back (Please note that if there are times that may not be suitable let them know).

Equality Your team at work - How Many Equalities?

Wherever there are people there are equalities issues, it's as simple as people=equalities

We are always going to have either a quiz (sometimes with prizes) or just a simple question we would like you to answer. In UNISON we focus mainly on four equalities groups which our SOGs represent i.e Black, Disabled, LGBT+ and Women

Therefore, we thought we could do a very quick survey!

Here are some ways to destress both now and in the future, as some of us might still suffer after the lock down measures are lifted.

1. Exercise - now lockdown is slightly easier and we can get outside particularly in the longer days
2. Burn a scented candle with a soothing smell - it can help reduce stress and anxiety
3. Reduce caffeine – Difficult, as it is in coffee, tea, chocolate and energy drinks - i.e.. so much of what we enjoy!
4. Write it down – It does help to put it on paper. Then you can leave it for a while and if you've written something negative you can go back to it and try and think rationally whether it is true



5. Spend time with friends and family online or by phone just now - This is something most of us are probably desperate to do in person after this lockdown is over. When we have strong social ties it helps us with stress and lowers our anxiety. Keeping in touch can reduce our anxiety.



6. Laugh – Laughter is a great tonic to relieve stress and relax your muscles. I am sure a lot of you smiled at the Captain Tom story as it was something positive during this difficult period.



Think of your team and see if you can identify if you have any of the groups represented in the team?

For example 2 women, 1 Black 1 LGBT+, and 1 Disabled

Please e-mail kathleenunison@gmail.com with your answers (It is literally just numbers, nothing confidential)

Of course, remember you may not actually know so that's fine, it is more to get us thinking equalities. I will be asking all stewards when I roll out our Branch Equalities program and it will be interesting to compare the two results. I will share the results in due course and let us see if overall we have similar.

I would grateful if you answer this question which is more to make us all think than anything else.

Black members

Benson Mugyemi



Black History Month in the UK is always in October and this year will be important as the Black Workers have been

so badly affected with COVID-19

Black History Month theme this year is focusing on the past 60 years of Black British

Theatre. Lincoln T M A Perry was considered the first black actor who changed his name to Stepin Fetchit. His first film was MGM'S In Old Kentucky. Earl Cameron had been the first known British Black actor to star in the film; he also made several appearances in Doctor Who.

During October why not this year recognise our fellow Black Members as we celebrate Black History Month or if you would like us to organise an event please let Black Members Officer Benson Mugyemi on benmugyeni@gmail.com or Equalities Officer Kathleen Kennedy on kathleenunison@gmail.com know.

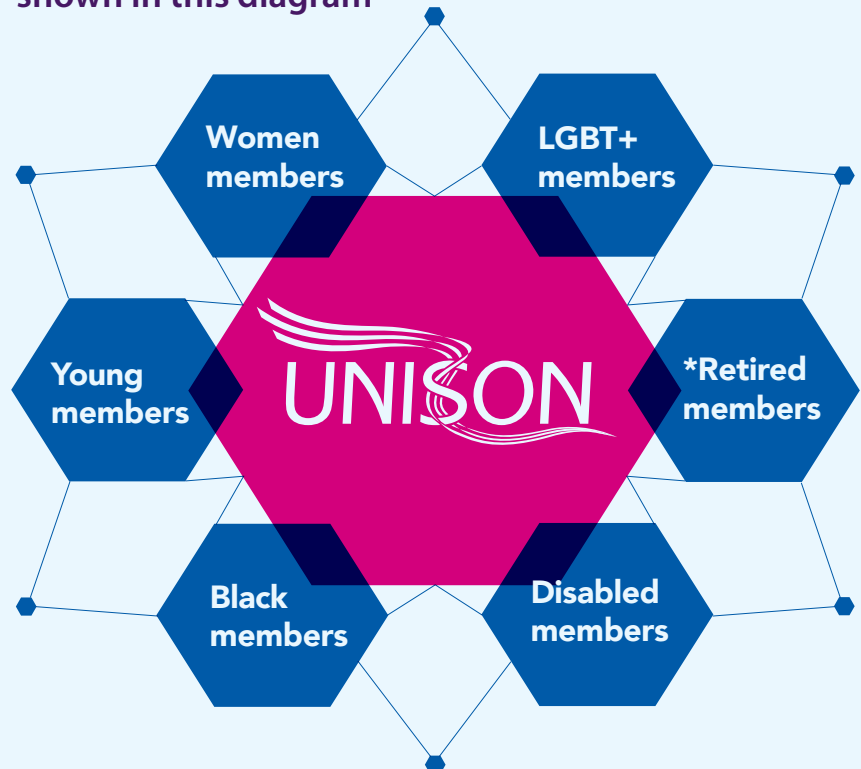
Benson Mugyemi wrote in an e-mail asking all Black Members to get in touch with him as he would like to know every Black members' opinions as they are all important. Benson also is interested in starting a Black Members Self Organised Group which will raise Black Members' concerns such as racism etc with the Branch Committee and assist with the appropriate action.

STUC Black Workers Committee have written to the Scottish government with concerns which

UNISON echoes in an open letter highlighting their 5 main asks.

- Record, analyse and publish the disaggregated data on how COVID 19 has affected Black and Minority Ethnic communities;
- Ensure Black and Minority Ethnic workers are paid well and fairly, and that they have all the protective equipment and rights at work to keep them safe;
- Ensure Black and Minority Ethnic people in hospitals, care homes and other care settings receive equal levels of care that they would expect;
- Ensure Black and Minority Ethnic people in detention centres and prisons are protected and are having their basic needs met;
- Publish an action plan as to how we address the

The other UNISON self organised groups (SOGs) are shown in this diagram



*The fact that retired members are no longer part of the current workforce exempts them from some internal committee membership

May 17: International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

May 17th 1990 was the year that saw the removal of homosexuality from the World Health Organisations International Classification of Diseases. The significance of this event and day continues to be a focal point for celebration and activism across the globe. The first International Day Against Homophobia on May 17th 2005, the movement has continued to grow and develop but with one clear vision: freedom and equality for all sexual, gender and bodily minorities.

Activities can be from parades and festivals to bike rides and movie nights, reflecting the diversity of social, religious, cultural and political contexts in which LGBT rights violations occur. May 17 activism has had a positive impact on equality legislation across the world, as governments have used the date to mark their own equality progress. For e.g. France used the day in 2009 to become the first country in the world to officially remove transgender issues from

its list of mental illnesses. Taiwan became the first country in Asia to pass legislation legally recognizing same sex marriage on May 17th 2019.

Many positive steps toward equality, there is still so much more to be done. In fact, same sex acts are still illegal in 37 of the 130 countries which celebrate May 17. This day provides an opportunity to raise awareness of violence, discrimination and repression of our LGBT sisters and brothers across the world, and to engage in dialogue with media, policy makers and the wider society to effect real change and take the steps needed to make equality a reality.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances we find ourselves in, there are was plenty of opportunities that you may have been involved in May17 2020 'Breaking the Silence'. Events and activities on all continents can be found through the link at the bottom of this page, including an LGBTI World Tour organised by LGBT Scotland, which will take you on a tour of LGBTI people and their lives

Now more than ever it is vital that we stand together and for each other. Solidarity always.

Ann Gray

Domestic abuse – Help is out there

The branch shares the Scottish Government's concerns about women and children who are most vulnerable to harm from domestic abuse. Please remember UNISON is always here to assist.

Evidence shows that domestic violence is on the rise as a result of the pandemic. Evidence from China, Italy, Spain, France and Australia along with evidence from past epidemics and disasters suggests that even post-disaster, domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, as well as wider exploitation, all remain a real threat to many women and children.

As lockdown measures ease across Scotland, there is a new increase in risk, as there will still be a lack of physical access to 'normal' supportive services. This means that we will all need to be more aware of how we look out for one another.

If you are a line manager it is important to ask open-ended questions of your staff just to check how they are.

There may also be an increase in mental health issues specifically for women, and particularly for those mothers who have been trying to teach their children during lockdown. Even after the summer holidays they may still

have to be doing some of the teaching, as well as returning to their own jobs.

Often women are low paid workers, and this highlights the real need for family friendly procedures, as women more commonly have child caring issues or other caring duties.

If you need support at this time you can contact branch welfare officer, Ann Gray: 07919 392101 e-mail: ann.gray@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or There for you, UNISON's welfare charity

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/>

International Women's Day 2020

Taking action for women's equality

The branch, led by Equalities Officer, Kathleen Kennedy, celebrated International Women's Day by visiting members in workplaces in Deeside and with a stall in Woodhill House.

International Women's Day falls on 8th March and began in 1913. It aims to eliminate discrimination against women across the world. UNISON's membership is three quarters women so it is an important day in UNISON's calendar.

Kathleen and Morag got a warm welcome when they visited Banchory Social Work Office and Aboyne Academy. A visit to Dalvenie Gardens had to be rearranged due to the Coronavirus.

Kathleen said, "We chose to go to an area which we hadn't really visited before as we have a new steward, Jackie Roy there. Unfortunately at the last minute Jackie had to call off. However Pensions Champion Morag Lawrence and myself went along."

The branch also held a stall in Woodhill House where Morag Lawrence, Ann McEvoy (UNISON Local Organiser) and Kathleen gave out cupcakes and UNISON freebies to members and encouraged non-members to join. The UNISON hand sanitiser went down especially well.

"We had hoped from there to start conversations on how we can support women members and help them support each other and over time to develop a self organised group," added Kathleen.

Kathleen had planned to be back in the Banchory area around the end of March and although this has had to be postponed because of the Coronavirus pandemic, it is still on the agenda.

If you would be interested in the branch visiting your workplace, please contact Kathleen at kathleenunison@gmail.com and she will be happy to arrange a visit once the current lockdown is lifted. For members at a distance this may be through online means.

However Kathleen said, "If one thing that is good has come out of the Coronavirus pandemic it is that a lot of us have used technology more, so if we can't always get to you physically we maybe can virtually!"

"We really do want to hear from you," urged Kathleen. "Maybe you have an idea that would be good for the Branch or a campaign. We will look into everything. No matter where you are in the Branch you are just as important as every other member."



Disability history month to launch Year of the Disabled Workers 2021

Disability History Month is about celebrating achievements of people with disabilities. Our theme this year is 'turning disability into ability'. It takes place every year and this year it is from the 18th November until 20 December 2020.

The branch is planning an event on the 3rd December, which is the International Day for people with Disabilities, as we thought this would be an appropriate day to celebrate.

The branch will be using Disability History Month in 2020 to springboard into the Year of Disabled Worker which will take place in 2021.

This was agreed at last year UNISON's National Delegates Conference when a motion from South Lanarkshire branch was passed overwhelmingly, to make 2021 UNISON's Year of Disabled Worker. This is about recognising the contributions disabled workers make to the workplace and advancing them.

But this is not just about members with disabilities. It will include everyone of us in some way. Statistics show that one in five of us has a disability whether

visible or invisible. And I am sure that we all know someone in the workplace with a disability or chronic health issue. In the future it could be any one of us.

The Branch Committee has set up a working group for both Disability History Month and 2021 The Year of the Disabled Worker – so each part of the branch will be included. Our hope is that everyone in the branch will feel part of 2021.

You may be interested in finding out more or being involved some way and we would really like to include all our members in celebrating this year, with different events throughout the year around the theme of 'turning disability into ability'. Remember this is not just aimed at disabled members but everyone of all abilities.

There will be lots of things you can do. It would be great if you could volunteer to assist with Disability History Month, but that doesn't mean you need to be involved with the Year of the Disabled Worker or vice versa.

You maybe just be able to put a poster or change your e-mail signature - every little helps in putting the message across.

Remember – TURNING DISABILITY INTO ABILITY



Taking forward equalities in the branch and with employers



Equalities Officer, Kathleen Kennedy, has set herself an ambitious work

plan to take forward equalities within the branch, the council and the CVS employers.

Kathleen has been seconded to the branch from Aberdeenshire Council for a two year period and is keen to make the most of this time. Her work plan has now been approved by the branch.

Kathleen said, "My ambition is to integrate equalities into everything we do as a branch and in the approach of our employers.

"Most of our members come within a protected characteristics category – for example more than two thirds are women - and they are therefore entitled to certain protections, so equalities affects all of us."

She has already identified areas where she is hoping to work with Aberdeenshire Council, for example to promote Reasonable Adjustment Passports for workers with disabilities and chronic health conditions, and to support good practice on Equality Impact Assessments which have long been of concern to the branch.

The branch has also identified a number of concerns around equalities relating to members dismissed on capability grounds and Kathleen is planning to do

more work on this.

Although some of these plans have had to be put on hold in the current Covid-19 crisis, Kathleen is preparing for the time when things return to some kind of normal. She has been offered a seat on Aberdeenshire Council's Equalities Board and will take this up when she can.

Kathleen is keen to point out that she also wants to support members in the CVS employers so if you need any support around equalities matters Kathleen will be glad to help and is hoping to join Skype meetings with Cornerstone and CVS stewards when that can be arranged.

In the meantime she has been kept busy planning for Disability History Month and the Year of the Disabled Worker 2021. (see article on page*), keeping members informed about disability through this newsletter and through the Equalities page on the branch website and continuing her Scottish and National work with the Disabled Members Committees.

Kathleen has also set up an Equalities Diary and the branch will be celebrating days and months with particular relevance for our members. You can check it out on this link and if you see anything we've missed, do let Kathleen know. <http://aberdeenshireunison.org/equalities-and-self-organisation/>

If you need to get in contact with Kathleen she will be glad to hear from you and can be contacted on kathleenunison@gmail.com



Here are the answers to the equalities quiz from February edition of the Equality Matters Newsletter - well done to all those who entered

Question	Answer
Who is the Scottish minister for Equalities?	Christina McKelvie
What was the first equality legislation?	Equal Pay
What name and why are migrants from the Caribbean who came to Britain between 1948 and 1971 called?	Windrush Generation - the first migrants arrived on the British ship called the Windrush
How many protected characteristics in the Equalities Act and name them?	Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, sex orientation
What two equality history months meet?	LGBT+ History Month and Women History Month
Who was the first openly LGBT+ MP to be elected and when?	Stephen Twigg (May 1997) - he was out before elected
First woman to take her seat at Westminster?	Nancy Astor
What did the judgement rule that employers do in the Archibald vs Fife Council case?	Make reasonable adjustments to ensure a disabled person is not placed at a disadvantage
What was former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's disability?	He had lost one eye
When was the first race legislation in the UK?	1965
What is compulsory length of maternity leave a mother must take after baby is born?	2 weeks for office work and 4 weeks for factory work
What is the Scottish Parliament's post code and what the significance?	EH99 1SP 99 - Scottish Parliament began in 1999 SP - Scottish Parliament
What does our UNISON's President Josie Bird for this year says about herself in regards what particular UNISON' structure she came through?	The first president to come through the young members' structure
What preservative had a racist symbol on to 2002 and who made it?	Roberson's Jam and Marmalade
What happened to Women's football on 5 December 1921 and why?	It was banned as it was viewed as unsuitable for women after men came back from World War One
When was the first Equal Pay Act passed in the UK?	1970
According to a survey in 2018 the UK, what percentage of the population in disabled?	22%
What date did free personal care for over 65 come in, in Scotland?	1 July 2002
When Homosexuality was legalised in Scotland when?	1981
When was Homosexuality legalised in England and Wales?	1967
What year did Scotland welcomed their 2,000th Syrian New Scot?	2017