

 CWU
BAME
OFFICER
TOOLKIT

USEFUL CONTACTS

UNIONLINE Free Helpline for CWU members

Tel: 0300 333 0303

CWU Bullying & Harassment Helpline

Tel: FREEPHONE 0800 090 2303

Equality, Education & Development Department

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FOREWORD

Firstly, congratulations on being elected to the position of BAME Officer in your Branch and an especially warm welcome if you are holding this position for the first time. You are now part of a very important group of Reps within the CWU who effectively are part of our wider family.

The role of a BAME Officer is something that is very important within the CWU and this position is also enshrined within the Union's Rule Book (www.cwu.org/about-the-cwu/union-matters/rulebook). We are committed to making sure that all of our BAME Officers have the basic support from my department to help you in your role. This toolkit will provide clarity around the definition of your role and what the role entails.

If you have any feedback on this or any of our other equality strand toolkits, please do not hesitate to contact the Equality, Education & Development Department.

INTRODUCTION

As a BAME Officer you will play an important role within your Branch and it is important that if you feel you require any further support or clarification around a query raised by either your Branch or one of your members, there is an extensive equality family that you are able to link into for support. People from visible and invisible ethnic heritage communities will face many challenges both within the workplace and at home and we should aim to support and encourage each other to become more active. We hope you find this toolkit useful and remember that you have the help and knowledge of your Regional BAME Lead, other BAME Officers, your NEC BAME Leads and not forgetting the Equality, Education & Development department.

ELECTION PROCESS

Every BAME Officer position advertised should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as per the rules of the CWU. If you are standing for election, guidance can be given to you on how to complete a biography and/or biographical address. We would refer you to www.unlock.cwu.org/resource/election-guidance-and-resources/how-to-write-an-election-address where important practical information is set out for you. Your Branch can also help you with this.

THE ROLE OF THE BAME OFFICER

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Officers work to defend and extend the rights of BAME members alongside all CWU members. A broad guide to the role is illustrated below:

- Promoting issues affecting BAME workers to the branch committee.
- Reporting to their region on relevant issues, where appropriate
- Escalating relevant issues where necessary. This should involve collaborative work with their respective Regional Leads and Equality Officer and if necessary the appropriate IR reps.
- Generally working closely with your Regional BAME Lead.
- Acting as a general point of contact where necessary on BAME issues.
- Providing information to BAME members (liaise with the branch on this accordingly). Where possible, direct communication with BAME members is a good way to have effective outreach (newsletter etc).
- Attending Regional and National Equality meetings, TUC or STUC Black Workers Conference (latter as a visitor if individual is not elected to attend via right through CWU elections).
- Involvement and support of CWU campaigns against Racism, promoting rights of migrant workers and refugees etc.
- Submitting of motions to CWU General Conference (equality section). If you need assistance with writing a motion, please speak with someone in your Branch and also check CWU Unlock.



In addition to this, we would also draw your attention to the Equality Leads Structure booklet and specifically the Equality Core Objectives, which are as follows:

- To promote and actively campaign on CWU Equality, Education and Development policies.
- To encourage CWU representatives and members from under-represented groups to take a more active part in branch affairs, the union in general, as well as political issues affecting the subject matter of our equality priorities.
- To encourage CWU members from under-represented groups to become union activists and actively participate in CWU training and Education.
- To report and raise equality matters with the respective committees.
- To deal with equality issues and to pursue them through the equality lead structure and mainstream union structure.
- You can access the Equality Leads Structure Booklet here https://unlock.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/06484_booklet-Equality-Leads-Structures-005.pdf

THE ROLE OF THE BAME OFFICER

- To work under the direction of the Regional BAME Lead and oversee all related equality work within their branch and workplaces.
- The Branch BAME Officer will liaise with the relevant CWU National, Regional, Branch representatives and lay members as appropriate and act as a point of contact where necessary.
- To support the development of the Union's equality work within the wider trade union movement, including building alliances with organisations that share the same values and interests as the union at a local level.
- The Branch BAME Officer shall prepare a branch report that shall be placed before the branch committee meeting.
- The Branch BAME Officer shall prepare an annual report on behalf of the branch that shall be placed before the branch AGM.

WORKING WITH YOUR BRANCH

These are some ideas to help you become more effective locally, within your branch and within your BAME role:

- Get a copy of the branch constitution rules and policies, including any branch bye-laws, which show additional rules agreed at Branch level
- An up to date CWU rulebook
- Work with your Branch Secretary/Membership secretary to familiarise yourself with the BAME members in your Branch so you can develop contact accordingly. Ensure any work done here is GDPR compliant
- Dates and times of branch and Regional Equality Committee meetings to attend and play an active role within. If you cannot attend then send your apologies and reasons for non attendance
- Produce a report for meetings on any activity (workplace and/or society)
- Ask your branch committee about what they expect from you in your role as BAME Officer
- Get to know your committee members (their roles and responsibilities) get their contact details including emails and telephone numbers
- If you want to attend CWU courses/events seek guidance from your branch secretary
- Contact the CWU Equality, Education & Development Dept for a latest copy of the Education & Training Prospectus

MAKING CHANGES

As a BAME Officer you will have the ability to submit motions. Branch motions should be relevant to processes and issues within your branch. For more information on how to write a motion, please visit www.unlock.cwu.org/news/motion-writing-a-masterclass-with-joyce-stevenson. There are courses in the CWU education programme which help in this respect and you should check with the Education department to see what is available.

- If a BAME member asks you to represent them you should consider liaising with your local reps and work with them accordingly
- Consider setting up a branch BAME Facebook page and encourage members to join or utilise other social media platforms including our own national strand-based CWU social media groups.

CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVISM

A key role of the BAME Officer will be to support campaigns which resonate amongst the BAME communities. For example, we are seeing asylum seekers and refugees being treated appallingly, having to risk their lives to pursue a better life free from persecution and oppression. Depending on how active a BAME Officer wants to be and how much support can be gleaned from the Branch this could be a really busy area of work. The campaign against racism is something that is also a key priority for the CWU. There will be many opportunities throughout the year to attend and support counter far-right rallies. The anti-racism movement has seen off the BNP, EDL and UKIP. We now see the creation of other groups and our Union is committed to a strong anti-racism agenda and we will want you to be a part of this. We have been working very closely with Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC), which is designed to help our representatives challenge racism in a constructive and knowledgeable way.

The CWU has developed a new anti-racism framework and there will be various avenues of engagement for our Regions. Our BAME Officers are encouraged to work with the Regional BAME Leads on this work. The CWU also has an anti-racism statement, which several thousand CWU reps have signed up to.

Other issues could involve matters linked to health. For example the CWU has been working closely with the ACLT (African Caribbean Leukemia Trust) as the number of bone marrow donors in BAME communities has always been significantly lower than their non-BAME counterparts. Rates of Prostate Cancer in the BAME communities are higher than non-BAME people and in some ethnic groups the rates are extremely high.

Sign and promote the CWU anti-racism statement

Visit: www.cwu.org/cwu-anti-racism-statement

The values of a trade union bridge every divide and the CWU is a strong anti-racist organisation. We deliver change together, we win ballots together, we take on employers together, and we will confront racism together.

Our priority is to unite working people by recognising that we share far more in common with one another than we do with those who seek to exploit and divide us.

The signatories of this statement commit to:

- Calling out and challenging racism wherever we see it, in wider society or the workplace
- Uniting working people, by being open to new effective approaches, including practical steps that tackle racism and all forms of injustice through the power of our collective strength
- Promoting this statement to colleagues, friends and family – urging them to show their support.

Other possible campaign areas that could be considered include:

- Campaign against racism to end institutional and other forms of discrimination.
- Campaign to end job segregation to close the gender, disability and race pay gaps
- Campaign to challenge the under-representation of BAME groups in the labour and trade union movement

FIGHTING THE FAR RIGHT

Over the years, the CWU has been at the forefront of fighting racism and fascism.

The Regional BAME Leads sees this as a very important part of their work and any support you can coordinate in your branch would be very welcome, working together with them.

The special online conference held in November 2021, endorsed a new anti-racism strategy that builds on our commitment in this area.

INQUEST

There are far too many deaths in custody and the CWU has worked closely with Inquest to try to highlight this unfortunate statistic. We would encourage you to keep up to date with any relevant campaigns and raise awareness of these in your own branches.

BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM) MOVEMENT

Race inequality is a society wide issue. The CWU are an anti-racist trade union. The tragic murder of George Floyd underlined systemic racism yet again. As a BAME Officer, we encourage you to work with your Regional BAME Lead to campaign on issues that support the Black Lives Matter movement.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH (BHM)

Black History Month is a very important month in the BAME activists calendar. The CWU does not limit BHM to just one month, the month of October and those leading up to it, should see an increased degree of activity for the BAME Officer. Consideration should be given to making sure workplaces are BHM positive by organising events, or getting pull-ups from CWU HQ which can be used in canteens or WTL (Work Time Learning) locations. If you wanted to be really bold you can hold a BHM event and get some panel speakers. If you are interested in doing this you may wish to speak to the Equality, Education & Development Department first. We would encourage branches to develop their own pull-ups, which can be sourced fairly easily and are quite cheap to produce.

EQUALITY ENGAGEMENT, PLANNING & EVENTS

A BAME Officer must make themselves relevant in their Branch. Their Branch will be keen to see an active BAME Officer and drafting and delivering an equality plan is a key part of this.

Mapping the demography of the membership is important. Your Equality Officer may well have already done this. If they haven't then this should be something you can jointly undertake. Once you know the demographics of your branch membership you can tailor an approach accordingly making communications much more relevant.

As we have highlighted above there are numerous options in terms of building up a plan or activities. They are just some ideas to get you thinking in the right direction.

Depending on what part of the country your branch is in will impact the membership demographics. Some parts of the UK are far more diverse than others and your audience will be varied depending on where you are working (if the workforce reflects the local community).

The Equality, Education & Development department is here to help anyone who wants some help with devising an equality action plan.

Always ensure any work using membership data is GDPR compliant. If you need any assistance please contact the CWU Information Officer Denis Lenihan (dlenihan@cwu.org)

YOUR STATUS AS A TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVE

As a trade union representative, every union rep is covered by law and cannot be treated less favourably as a result of their trade union activity. There is a comprehensive guide produced by ACAS (www.acas.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/trade-union-representation-in-the-workplace.pdf), which details these rights and protections.

The BAME Officer position is an important role in your Branch and this is written into the Union's Rule Book.

The role is interesting and varied and there is also lots of support on hand for anyone wishing to try their hand at this position. If you are passionate about inequality and want to argue and campaign for positive change, this is something that will be of definite interest to you.

BRANCH SUB GROUPS

A number of positive case studies exist in terms of promoting best practice. Addressing industrial relations in a positive way to promote BAME issues is a real winner and brings kudos for the employer in addition to promoting your objectives.

Some ideas which branches could run with is, where demand is in place, a local race sub-committee can be set up. Some branches have already done this to great success. When there is an election for a BAME Officer, if the branch gets multiple nominations why not have multiple BAME Officers? Again, this is something that is already being adopted in a number of branches - the clever thing about this is, when it comes to issues around succession planning, these types of positive behaviours go a long way.

The bottom line is where there is a will there is a way. Networking is such an important part of the role as we have to all share our positive experiences so that the benefit of these actions can be seen far and wide.

DISCIPLINARY, DISMISSAL AND PROMOTION TRENDS

This aspect of a BAME Officer's role is potentially far reaching and in a positive way demonstrates excellent value in terms of the role. If you believed that anecdotally there was a disproportionate number of BAME people being passed up for promotion, being subjected to discipline or facing some other kind of unjust detriment, in theory you could make a formal request to the employer for data which is relevant to these concerns.

RACE FOCUSED COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Following on from above, collective bargaining opportunities should have race equality front and centre when negotiations take place. Race pay audits are a growing concept and more and more employers are embracing the responsibility to highlight this important pay data based on race. There is currently no statutory requirement for race pay audits to be undertaken, however, we anticipate this will change in the near future.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CWU has created a Black History Exhibition which is available to hire for free. The exhibition currently gives an excellent insight into characters both existing and historical legends from a black history perspective. People such as Vivian Malone Jones, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Mary Seacole, Rosa Parks, Toussaint L'Overture and Anthony Walker are all profiled in order that people who see the exhibition can gain a sufficient learning experience that will appreciate the full role played by those profiled in the exhibition. Moreover, such information can dovetail in with other national events such as International Women's Day, which aims to celebrate the diversity of women from all backgrounds. For more information relating to hiring such exhibition stands for free, please contact equality&education@cwu.org. If any Branch wishes to sponsor the creation of a new profile please contact the department.

RECOGNISING RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

Religious festivals are an important part of people's lives, irrespective of your faith, or lack of faith. Since December 2003, discrimination on the grounds of religion is now unlawful. Even though there is legal protection now in place, CWU have seen inexcusable barriers put in the way of its members and such barriers have been successfully challenged by the CWU on various occasions. BAME Officers can play a pivotal role in helping members acquire time off

to observe religious festivals. For example, ensuring members are aware that as long as the request has been made in good time, it would be difficult for an employer to objectively justify turning down a request to allow someone some time off to observe their religious festival. Ensuring members know to put their request in writing and not rely on verbal assurances, as it is important for them to evidence their request and if a member's request is turned down, BAME Officers can help them to consider what other steps may be open to them. Where appropriate, this should be done in conjunction with your IR rep (postal only).

EFFECTIVE MAPPING

Mapping is an essential part of the role for any representative who has responsibilities linked to an equality strand. The starting point for any representative is to know their membership and the demographic breakdown of the members. From a BAME Officer point of view the basic starting point is to know where your BAME members are. In some branches this won't be difficult as there may be very small numbers of BAME workers but in others there will be a strong BAME representation.

Accuracy of BAME membership is improving every year but as a BAME Officer you could coordinate an exercise in your own branch to get more complete data around this strand. This is an exercise that the BAME Officer can conduct but it would need to be controlled in a sensitive manner acknowledging that there can be no compulsion to provide this



data and that it is voluntary and required purely for monitoring purposes. Depending on your resources you may wish to organise some form of prize draw to incentivize a good response to any such exercise. Any work would also need to be GDPR compliant. For queries on this specific point you should refer to the CWU Information Officer at CWU Headquarters.

Equality Impact Assessment's or EIA's as they are sometimes known are an important part of any equality representatives role, when challenging any major organisational reorganisation. For example, if you had statistics in relation to promotions, disciplines and dismissals and you felt that there was a pattern where BAME people were disproportionately being represented in these patterns you could in theory look at the possibility of doing a local EIA. EIAs tend to be more effective in a public sector scenario but can be usable in our industries.

Similarly if there were BAME disabled people, or disabled people being targeted, this would also be grounds for a potential EIA.

The Equality, Education & Development Department believes that it is very good practice for the union to encourage the use of EIAs.

FACILITY TIME

Representatives involved in equality often question why they are not afforded any facility time to carry out their roles. The value of Union Learning Reps and Health & Safety Reps is acknowledged by virtue of the fact that these reps receive paid statutory facility time. There is more and more evidence that equality issues are interlinked into mainstream casework and the argument for facility time to be extended to these groups is more stronger now than it has ever been.

There is nothing stopping a BAME Officer from applying for some facility time. This could be a direct request to a line manager or to the Branch, depending on what industry you are working in. The important thing to remember is to demonstrate the value of the role, demonstrate how the role can promote positive industrial relations and how it could mitigate dispute escalation. On top of this there are the obvious benefits to encouraging a pro-diversity agenda and the known benefits of workplaces doing this. Visit www.cwu.org/ reps to download a Facility Time template document.

COMMUNICATION

There are many ways to communicate with your members. Think about what might work best within your Branch and workplaces and remember that you can use more than one method, examples include:

- Face to face
- Email
- Text and WhatsApp
- Websites
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Video conferencing such as Zoom, GoTo Meeting, Microsoft Teams
- Branch meetings
- Committee meetings
- Workplace visits
- Newsletters
- Notice boards
- Branch magazines
- Conferences

Support and guidance is available from the Equality, Education and Development Department and we would also suggest you liaise with your Branch Secretary as a matter of courtesy.

Notice Boards and newsletters are a particularly important way to keep in touch with your members and we would encourage the use of notice boards and the creation of a periodic newsletter.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

As part of Redesign, Education and Training are now part of the CWU Equality, Education & Development department. Justice is the goal, solidarity is the tool, education is the key! This is a CWU mantra, which underpins all of its activities, especially education and training. BAME workshops and training are readily available through CWU and we would encourage you to check with the department to get a copy of the latest Education programme. There is also the opportunity, if there is sufficient demand in a Branch/Region, to facilitate a Black Leadership workshop.

Please contact the department for the latest CWU Education & Training Prospectus.

Here is a quick look at some of the BAME Officers currently in position. If you want to speak to someone about the role and what it entails, you can speak to anyone in the wider equality family who will be more than happy to have a chat with you.

ADAM ALARAKHIA

I am a member and a Branch official of the CWU Leicestershire Branch. I was successfully elected as a BAME officer since 2014. I am also a CWU tutor.



I started working for Royal Mail in October 2002 and joined the Communication Workers Union immediately as I believe the trade union movement is like a family and I wanted to be a part of the family.

I believe it is vital for everyone to join a trade union as the trade union movement is for people and solidarity between workers and human being at large. As a Muslim I believe it is very important to join a trade union as it gives me an opportunity to fight against injustice, which is one of the teachings of the Islamic Faith.

BAME members at work face several issues, such as; bullying and harassment, racism, inequality, pay, grievances etc. The union is here to help us through these problems but it is so much more than just this.

MICHELLE BAILEY

I am an elected T&FS National Executive Committee member. My involvement within the Midland No 1 Branch has been as an Equality Officer and the Regional BAME Lead.



The reasons that I have become involved in the Equality area was to expand my overall knowledge and equip myself to challenge further the struggles faced within BAME communities, especially in the workplace.

I have always stood up against injustice and voiced concerns when I felt people have been treated unfairly. I feel a strong responsibility to represent and champion all CWU members and am also keen to do what I can towards changing the fact that BAME and other minority ethnic groups are under-represented in areas of public and civic life. I am an advocate of equality and have been involved in promoting this within the CWU and workplaces. I have regrettably experienced the discrimination that is evidently present within today's society and I want to be part of making cultural change in this respect.

If we are all better informed and each one of us feels empowered to challenge things we see that seem wrong, then we can be a powerful force for change. I strongly believe we should question and not just accept, what we are told. We are all entitled to ask for clarification when information does not seem to make sense. My motto is 'if you don't ask you don't get' and I am prepared to be the person who 'asks' on member's behalf.

SHARON PRATT

I have worked for Royal Mail for 30 plus years I joined the union on my first day at work. I am currently the southwest regional BAME executive, and my aims are to gain



more knowledge in order to assist me in helping our members and help the other BAME officers in my area so that we can promote equal rights and share our knowledge so that we constantly evolve and challenge any future injustices.

I became a union activist when the union helped me win a personal case against Royal Mail. It showed me that on my own it would have been a struggle but together with the union you can achieve anything!

Lastly on the BAME front, I grew up in rural Wiltshire in the 1970's as you can expect there were not many people from the BAME community around! My first experiences at school left me with mental health issues from the age of five to cope with. When neighbours heard that a BAME family were moving to the neighbourhood, one of them took it upon themselves to get a petition up to try and stop us from moving in! Luckily, they failed and after meeting us found we were just like them. I feel ignorance and lack of knowledge is to blame, so in confronting ignorance the BAME community need to educate ourselves, educate our workplaces, and together we can arm ourselves for the future! This may sound like fighting talk, but life is for many of us a long battle for equal rights.

MOHAMMED SAPIE

I have been employed by Royal Mail since 2010. I became my branch (Scotland no2) BAME rep in March 2021 and Regional Rep for Scotland very soon after that. The



Covid-19 pandemic exposed grotesque injustice towards working class BAME communities. In addition, the Black Lives Matter campaign was still fresh in my mind. The position had been vacant for some time, and I realised that there are lots of areas needing addressing for CWU BAME in Scotland and so I accepted the offer to take up the role.

There is currently a climate of intensifying class struggle in the UK with issues including increasing cost of living, high inflation, stagnant wages and worsening terms and conditions disproportionately affecting BAME workers. I want to establish a network of support as well as seeing all BAME workers becoming unionised and challenge these and other issues!

Racism including covert racism or hidden biases continue to exist in our workplaces and society leading to disadvantage, inequity, discrimination, and fear. Other pressing issues include those mentioned above (high cost of living, stagnant wages, worsening terms and conditions, and others) which also face the wider working class but with black/BAME workers more likely to experience these. COVID-19 has highlighted or exacerbated many longstanding issues including that black/BAME workers are more likely to live in poorer socioeconomic circumstances leading to poorer physical and mental health outcomes. I look forward to helping my region promote race equality issues and engage with black workers everywhere.



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