

 CWU
LGBT +
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

CWU HQ, 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX

Tel: 0208 971 7340

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FOREWORD

Firstly, congratulations on being elected as a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans plus (LGBT+) activist and an especially warm welcome if you are holding an LGBT+ position for the first time. You are now part of a very important group of representatives within the CWU and are effectively part of our wider CWU structure. We are committed to making sure that all of our activists have the right help and support. This toolkit provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of an LGBT+ activist, including useful information to help you get started in your role. We hope you find this toolkit useful.



INTRODUCTION

People from the LGBT+ community can face a variety of challenges both within the workplace and in wider society, usually as a result of prejudice and discrimination and a lack of rights. As an activist you play a key role in making sure you support and encourage members to become more active in the CWU by campaigning and working together to address the challenges the LGBT+ community face. As a CWU representative often you will be the first point of contact for members who are having problems. But you are not on your own, remember you also have the help and knowledge of your NEC Leads, Regional Leads and other activists, including the Equality, Education & Development department within the CWU.

YOUR STATUS AS A TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVE

The Trade Union Consolidation Act and the Right not to Face Discrimination on the Basis of Trade Union Activity

As an activist, you have certain rights under employment law. These are set out in the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) code of practice available here www.acas.org.uk/acas-guides-on-trade-union-and-employee-representation.

THE ROLE OF THE LGBT+ ACTIVIST

LGBT+ activists work to defend and extend the rights of LGBT+ members and the LGBT+ community. A broad overview of the role is illustrated below:

- To act as a point of contact between members and their respective branches and/or region.
- To report and escalate relevant issues where necessary. This should involve working collaboratively with your respective Regional/ National Lead and if appropriate with the relevant branch and/or IR reps.
- For Regional/ National LGBT+ Leads to work closely with branches and activists to promote and share information and communications with LGBT+ members.
- Attend Regional and National Equality meetings, TUC or STUC LGBT+ or other Regional Conferences (If you are not elected to attend by right, activists are encouraged to work with their local branches for support to attend such events either as a visitor or as part of the CWU's national delegation).
- To promote LGBT+ issues and actively support CWU campaigns against bigotry, intolerance, Conversion Therapy and promote the rights and interests of LGBT+ communities against threats of anti-LGBT+ legislation, such as Gender Recognition Act reforms or "Bathroom Bills", etc.
- Create change and make CWU policy by taking a motion to CWU General Conference (equality section) – liaise with your Branch for information and guidance on how to write a motion and how to make submissions for conference or check CWU Unlock.
- To encourage CWU representatives and members from under-represented groups to take a more active part in their branch and 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 the CWU training and Education programme.

GETTING STARTED

These are some ideas to help you get started in your role:

- **CWU Rules and procedures:** Obtain a copy of the Branch/Regional/National constitution rules and policies, including any bye-laws, which show additional rules. Your Branch or Regional Secretary should be able to provide these. As an LGBT+ activist you need to be familiar with the Rules. You can obtain an updated copy of the National CWU rule book here: www.cwu.org/about-the-cwu/union-matters/rulebook/
- **Membership Contact and Engagement:** Work with Branches and Regions to familiarise yourself with where LGBT+ members are in your area of responsibility so you can develop contact accordingly. Ensure any work done here is GDPR compliant. There are many ways of contacting LGBT+ members but it is important to remember that LGBT+ people are often vulnerable to being “outed” and it can lead to upsetting or even dangerous consequences if handled insensitively. “Passive” ways of initiating contact include emailing LGBT+ members a regular Branch Newsletter, from which members can gain contact information and respond if they so wish or you could simply email LGBT+ members and introduce yourself as an LGBT+ activist, so anyone in need of contact knows who you are and how to contact you safely.
- **Meeting arrangements:** Be aware of dates and times of meetings you need to attend. You can find out what equality meetings you should be attending via the CWU’s Equality Structure booklet, accessible here: <https://unlock.cwu.org/resource/committee-roles-and-structures> You should also contact your branch or regional secretary to find out what other meetings or events you should be attending. If you’re unable to attend a meeting, always send your apologies and reasons for your non-attendance.
- **Meeting/activity Reports;** It is good practice to produce a report for any meetings you have attended or any union activities you have undertaken in or outside of the workplace. This need not be long or exhaustive but is worth doing as it provides useful information to non-attendees of what has been discussed. It’s also worth keeping a record of decisions made and any tasks that may need to be followed up.
- **Role Expectations:** Ask your Branch/Regional Committee about what they expect from you in your role as an LGBT+ activist. Ask other existing LGBT+ activists as well, in order to get an idea of the work involved.
- **Know your branch committee:** Get to know other Committee Members within your remit, including their roles and responsibilities and obtain a copy of their contact details. Speak to your branch secretary or regional secretary for a list of contacts and ensure that all personal data is stored and compliant with GDPR laws.
- **Attending courses and events:** If you want to attend CWU courses or attend a CWU event always ask permission from your branch or seek guidance from your Branch Secretary. There are many different mainstream courses you can attend, including bespoke courses, such as the CWU’s IDAHOBIT and Trans awareness course.
- **Representing members:** If an LGBT+ member asks you to represent or assist them with an issue at work make sure you liaise and work with the local workplace Rep/IR Rep and Branch if appropriate. As LGBT+ activist, you will bring specialist knowledge and a unique outlook to any case. The local IR Rep will by the nature of their role have employer recognition and more experience in dealing with local and regional case work, however it is important that you work collectively - together you will make an awesome, unstoppable team!
- **Safe spaces:** Consider setting up local safe spaces for LGBT+ members such as a local CWU LGBT+ Facebook page or utilise other social media.

MAKING CHANGES

As a CWU representative you will have the ability through your branch or region to submit motions to AGMs and CWU National Conferences. Motions can be submitted to your branch or region. Branch or regional motions are usually relevant to processes and issues within the branch or region, whilst motions for National Conference can advocate for nationwide Union policy and direction, making them a powerful tool for change. For more information on how to write a motion, please go to CWU Unlock here: <https://unlock.cwu.org/news/motion-writing-a-masterclass-with-joyce-stevenson>.

CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVISM

You play a key role in supporting and promoting campaigns which resonate with LGBT+ members and the wider community. The CWU support the following LGBT+ campaigns:

- Ban on conversion therapy for all LGBT+ groups
- Gender Recognition Act reforms – to remove the need of medical diagnoses and the lengthy derogatory process under the Act.
- Better LGBT+ rights and protections for LGBT+ (nationally and internationally)
- Increasing the visibility of LGBT+ people, their history, lived experiences through education and promoting LGBT+ History Month.
- Prides
- TUC Trans Alliance

The campaign for true and total equality is a key priority for the CWU. There will be many opportunities throughout the year for you to attend and support events, prides and rallies, so depending on how active you want to be as an LGBT+ activist and how much support you get from your branch or region, campaigning on LGBT+ issues could be a really busy area of work.

CWU STATEMENT ON TRANS+ RIGHTS

The CWU supports the right of all trans and non-binary members to dignity in the workplace and in wider society. Trans rights are human rights.

In the workplace

Trans women are women and trans men are men. We recognise the equal validity of non-binary people. Everyone deserves to be recognised in their self-defined gender at work by employers and colleagues. The CWU will support members going through the process of transitioning and their rights to access work facilities appropriate for their gender. We support the right of trans and non-binary people to self-define and to be addressed by correct pronouns at work. We support changes to work systems to reflect members self-defined gender identity.

The CWU will work with reps and union members to develop trans allies who can support their colleagues, fight discrimination and challenge bullying and harassment. We are committed to workplaces where everyone can be safe, included and respected. By challenging transphobia in the workplace we can also defeat it in society.

In wider society

The CWU supports progressive reform of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act. We believe a move away from the cruel treatment that many trans members experience in accessing their rights is long overdue, including more timely access to vital NHS services. We support changes in the law to a more humane, less lengthy and bureaucratic & cheaper process of gender self-identification as exists in other countries, such as the Republic of Ireland. We support legal rights for non-binary people.

In the UK and in the wider world trans and non-binary people have been targeted and scapegoated, sometimes violently. We reject the attempts of the far right and other reactionaries to divide working people. We stand in solidarity with our trans and non-binary members.”

LGBT+ ISSUES

Gender Recognition Act

The current system of Gender Identity Clinics, which gate-keep the treatments so many trans people consider vital to their well-being and self-identity, is massively over-subscribed and under-funded, proving totally inadequate to the needs of its patient-base, not to mention the regular complaints of individual Specialists withholding treatments for reasons other than the health and well-being of the patient. Waiting times across the country, particularly in rural areas are exponentially long, with an average admission wait of around 36 months. This has already resulted in numerous suicides or have forced people to resort to dangerous, unregulated hormone treatments from overseas. Reform of the UK Gender Recognition Act, which holds the key to unlocking better and swifter treatments for trans people, has been delayed time after time by successive Governments, often with the support of transphobic organisations and bias media reporting, who often portray LGBT+ people as representing some vague, unspecified danger to their own outlooks on life. Indirectly Non-Binary people face “exclusion by omission” on many of these issues, since not even the revised format of the Gender Recognition Act recognises non-binary status and it is the same for Intersex people, despite this being a recognised medical condition.

Conversion therapy

LGBT+ people should not be made to feel ashamed of who they are or how they choose to identify. Sexual orientations and gender identities are diverse and should be celebrated. Yet conversion therapy – sometimes called “gay cure” therapy is still legal and still practised in the UK today. This is despite government pledges to ban the practise.

Conversion therapy tries to suppress someone’s sexual orientation or stop them identifying as a different gender to their sex recorded at birth. It can include talking therapies and prayer, but more extreme forms can include exorcism, physical violence and food deprivation.

According to UK Government’s research, 7% of LGBT+ people have been offered or undergone conversion therapy. People are targeted in medical, psychiatric, psychological, religious and cultural settings.

LGBT+ history month

LGBT+ History Month is marked across the UK throughout February as an opportunity to connect and reflect on the past and present of the LGBT+ community including what lessons history can teach us for the future, celebrate LGBT+ culture and progress towards equality and the advancements of LGBT+ rights.

The history of LGBT+ rights and the fight to secure them has been slow but progressive: first we campaigned for homosexuality to be decriminalised, then for same-sex marriage to be both recognised and then equalised. Now we fight for the right of trans and non-binary people to be recognised as the unique individuals they know themselves to be. This is why solidarity and unity is so important in Union activism - we cannot succeed without us all joining the fight for *everyone’s* rights and recognition.

Pride

June is Pride month, the time of year when we celebrate LGBT+ people. It’s a great time to show support and recognise the contributions of LGBT+ people and communities, learn a little bit more about LGBT+ history, celebrate diversity, and consider the ways we all can contribute to creating a more inclusive society.

Activists are encouraged to actively participate in Pride parades or events. You may even want to organise your own event or arrange some training locally before a Pride parade.

To find Pride events in your area, check out this useful guide: www.gaypridecalendar.com/world

TUC Trans Alliance Network (TAN)

The TUC Trans Alliance Network (TAN) is a space for trade unions to organise together for trans rights at work and in wider society. Working closely with LGBT+ charities and community organisations, TAN create and share resources and research and co-ordinate campaigns. To find out more and get involved in the Network please contact your National LGBT+ Lead.

Recruiting and organising LGBT+ workers

Recruiting new members and engaging existing members is crucial for any union. It is worthwhile remembering why you first joined CWU and what helped you to become more active and/or become an activist. Remembering this will help you to provide a personal experience to potential new recruits. Other activities to help in recruiting and organising can include:

- Holding a discussion group or a meeting to find out what issues matter to your members;
- Looking for a 'quick win' by identifying an issue that has a reasonable chance of being resolved quickly and set about making it happen. This could be as simple as persuading your workplace to fly the LGBT+ or trans flags on relevant days - and providing the flags if necessary!
- Considering holding drop-in information sessions where members and potential recruits can get more information about the CWU.
- Making recruiting events LGBT+ themed, tie them into recognised events such as World Mental Health Day (10th October) *National Stress Awareness Day (occurs the first Wednesday in November every year)*, International Women's Day (8th March)
- Promoting LGBT+ calendar dates such as:
 - LGBT History Month - February
 - International Trans Day of Visibility – 31st March
 - International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) – 17th May
 - Pride Month (usually June)
 - International Non Binary People's Day – 14th July
 - Bi Visibility Day – 23rd September
 - National Coming Out Day – 11th October
 - Trans Awareness Week (13th – 20th November) culminating in Transgender Day of Remembrance.

- Delivering approved desk drops/e-flyers.
- Utilising CWU notice boards and ensuring the information is up to date and accurate. Perhaps issue a regular newsletter with current issues.
- Talking about the direct and indirect benefits of CWU membership including legal advice, membership benefits and special offers etc.

LGBT+ people at work

Perhaps the most central workplace issues for LGBT+ workers is whether they feel comfortable about being themselves at work. Being open about one's sexuality and gender identity at work can be challenging. Particularly for new entrant employees, BAME people, bisexual, Trans and non-binary people. It is important that LGBT+ activists understand that not all LGBT+ people are open about their sexuality or sexual identity and that harassment can take place when incidences of LGBT+ workers being outed without permission take place. Trans workers can also face challenges at work due to their sexual identity. Often processes and practices are not designed to accommodate their experiences, illustrating a lack of understanding around trans people's issues at work.

- It's important that LGBT+ activists understand all the issues that affect LGBT+ people at work. Activists can do this by being available or by creating safe spaces for LGBT+ workers to come together and discuss their interests and issues at work. Some active suggestions include:
 - Letting members know who you are, your role and how to contact you
 - Holding workplace surgeries or meetings
 - Creating a Facebook group page
 - Creating a WhatsApp group
 - Where demand is in place, setting up a local LGBT+ sub-committee. Some branches have already done this to great success

EQUALITY ENGAGEMENT, PLANNING & EVENTS

An LGBT+ activist must make themselves relevant. Your branch or region (depending on your position) will be keen to see an active LGBT+ activist and drafting and delivering an Equality Plan is a key part of this.

Mapping where LGBT+ members are is so important. Your Equality Officer, Branch Secretary or Regional Assistant Secretary (depending on your position) may well have already done this. If they haven't then this could be something you can jointly undertake with your Branch/Assist Regional Secretary and/or Membership Secretary. Only once you know the demographics of your branch/regional membership can you tailor an approach accordingly, making communications much more relevant.



Effective Mapping

Mapping is an essential part of 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 an LGBT+ activist's point of view the basic starting point is to know where your LGBT+ members are. In some branches this won't be difficult as there may be very small numbers of openly LGBT+ workers - but please remember that there might be others, possibly many others, who for whatever reason are not open, and whose anonymity must be considered, respected and facilitated as required by them. In others there may be a strong LGBT+ representation. Accuracy of LGBT+ membership is improving every year. You can use the CWU Mapping tool to help build up a picture of the workplace or branch in which you are responsible. Please work with your branch secretary or membership secretary when carrying out any mapping activities to ensure that all GDPR legislation is adhered to. You can access the CWU mapping tool here:

www.cwu.org/GROWtheunion. Please note you will need the reps resources password to be able to access the form. Please contact the Equality and Education Department to obtain access to the site.

Always ensure any work using membership data is UKGDPR compliant. If you need any assistance, please speak to your branch secretary or assistant regional secretary.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LGBT+?

There is no simple answer to this question. LGBT+ people can open up about their sexuality and/or sexual identity in many different ways at different times of their life. The best way to discover if someone has opened up about their sexual orientation or identity is to ask the individual. Remember not everyone will be comfortable talking about this issue and it may not be appropriate to do so. Always ask the individual first. Here are a few responses from LGBT+ members on what it means to them to be LGBT+

Well *there's* the Question! Although there is no "simple answer", the broad reply is that it's different - probably unique - to each of those on the LGBT+ spectrum. By far the best way to discover such things, if it is appropriate to do so (and remember it might well *not* be!) is to ask the individual. But as a very broad and rough guide, here's a few words from some of our current Regional Leads on the subject:

"I felt an enormous amount of simple relief when I finally came out as trans - previously, whatever I was doing, there was part of my mind saying, 'where are my boobs? Why isn't my hair longer? Why do I have to sit this way, sound that way etc?'. That all stopped - absolutely stopped - as soon as I came out. I could have all those things, however artificial they were in the beginning, I could behave and react as the woman I actually am inside. The relief is indescribable!" – **Roz White, CWU Regional Lead LGBT+, Scotland**

"I became an Ally because I recognised that I had a passion to support an under-represented group. The position is a privilege, to be an active ally to those with less access, and I take responsibility for making changes that will help others be successful." – **Liza Midgley, Regional Lead LGBT+, North East**

"I'm a lesbian but I prefer the word gay as I don't really like or associate the word lesbian with something that identifies me I've always thought I was different but I didn't know what it was until realising that I was attracted to women. It took me a while to come to terms with my sexual orientation but many people's journeys are very different. I don't think there's one way to come out, it's personal and very individual." – **Ruth Meadows, Regional Lead LGBT+, Wales and the Marches**

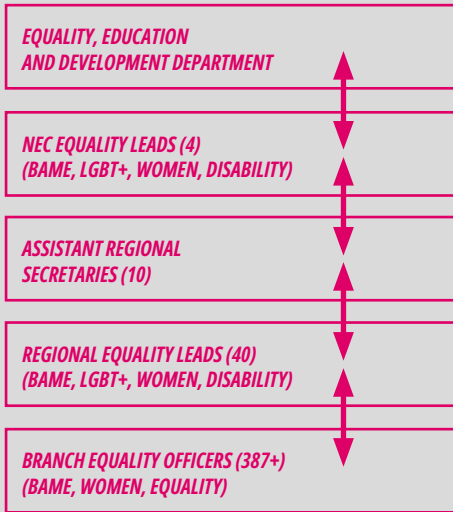
"Non-binary means many things to many people, but to me, being non-binary is a succinct way to describe how I don't easily fit into the categories of man or woman. For years the contrast between my appearance and my name and voice confused people around me and having simple language to describe the experience of not being seen as a man or a woman not only helps me explain that, it helps me find others with a similar experience within the trans community." – **Simon Carmichael, Regional Lead LGBT+, Northern Ireland**

"For me being gay means to be a person, a normal human being, a member of society, a neighbour, a friend, a colleague, a brother, a partner and a father. More importantly, though, it's not all that I am: it's a big part of my identity, yes, but it's not the entirety of me. I am far more than just my sexual orientation, but to dismiss that being gay is also intrinsically part of who I am, how it has shaped and impacted on how I see the world, affected how I have been treated in both my personal and work life, would be wrong. In summary I can't give you a clearer definition of what it means to be gay, as it is fundamentally part of who I am as a person." – **James Barrett, Regional Lead LGBT+, South West**

LGBT+ REPRESENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Equality Lead Engagement Structure illustrated below has purposely been designed to mainstream our LGBT+ equality work across all structures of the union and support LGBT+ activists achieve their aims and objectives.

Table 1: CWU Equality Engagement Structure



As shown in Table 1 the CWU Head of Equality, Education and Development works with the elected National Executive Council (NEC) LGBT+ Leads. The NEC LGBT+ Leads work with regional assistant secretaries and the regional LGBT+ leads. In turn, LGBT+ Regional leads work with branch equality officers and where in situ LGBT+ officers. Branch equality/LGBT+ officers then engage with the branch and LGBT+ lay members. The structure also enables LGBT+ activists to feedback on important LGBT+ issues or to seek support when needed. It's important to know who your regional and national LGBT+ leads are and share contact details. You can do this by contacting your branch secretary, regional assistant secretary or the Equality, Education and Development department who will be able to provide you with this information.

Maximising active membership participation in trade union structures is one of the CWU's key objectives. During the election period activists can play a key role in encouraging more LGBT+ members to stand for representative roles. In some progressive branches positive action has been introduced for example, some branches have created an LGBT+ officer position as part of their branch structure. There has also been some positive case studies of branches electing more than one LGBT+ officer where more than one LGBT+ member has stood for this role.

NETWORKING

Networking is also an important part of being a LGBT+ activist. It allows activists:

- to share ideas and information with other activists and members
- to provides opportunities to get advice and support or collaborate projects and/or initiatives
- to strengthen connections and the trade union movement
- to boost personal confidence
- to expand on activism visibility



FACILITIES AND RELEASE TO CARRY OUT CWU ACTIVITIES

Currently there are no statutory rights for LGBT+ activists to carry out trade union activities, however according to ACAS employers should:

“Consider the role of Union Equality Reps and needs for time off, facilities and training. Union Equality Reps can for example: promote diversity management, help ensure legal compliance, conduct audits, raise awareness and engage employers on equality issues...” (ACAS guide to Trade Union Representation in the Workplace)

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission also encourages positive joint workings with equality reps and encourages employers to:

“Consult with Union Equality Reps as a first step towards understanding the diverse needs of workers.” (EHRC Employment Statutory Code of Practice)

Therefore as an LGBT+ activists you are advised to seek support from your branch to assist with securing release time and facilities to enable you to do your duties.

Release requests could be for:

- Keeping in Touch with LGBT+ Members.
- Attending Union meetings.
- Training and Education
- Promoting union campaigns by organising and delivering specialist meetings and events.
- Assisting/advising on LGBT+ matters.

Facilities could include:

- Access to Safe spaces to listen to members concerns and issues.
- Access to a desk
- Access to computer and internet facilities.
- A specific email address for the LGBT+ position.
- A mobile phone or access to a telephone to facilitate a direct line to the LGBT+ activist
- Access to workplace union notice boards to share equality information and updates.

Please use this template form to apply for facilities and release with your branch.

www.cwu.org/reps/postal-resources

www.cwu.org/reps/tfs-resources

Please note you will need the reps resources password to be able to access the form. Please contact the Equality and Education Department to obtain access to the site.



COMMUNICATION

There are many ways to communicate with your members. Think about what might work best within your area of responsibility and remember that you can use more than one method. Examples include:

- Face to face
- E-Mail
- Text and WhatsApp
- Websites
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Video conferencing such as Zoom, GoTo Meeting, Microsoft Teams
- Branch Committee meetings
- Workplace visits
- Newsletters on Notice Boards and in Branch magazines or email updates
- 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

Justice is the goal, Solidarity is the tool, Education is the key! This is a CWU mantra which underpins CWU education and training. The CWU provide a broad range of residential and online education and training courses for LGBT+ activists, including IDAHOBIT and trans awareness course workshops. For more information on the different courses available to you and when they are due to take place please contact the Equality, Education and Development department at courseadmin@cwu.org to obtain a copy of the CWU's latest education prospectus. Applications for courses must be made through your branch. Please contact your branch secretary to make a request.

DEFINITIONS

There are many different definitions within the LGBT+ community. The following link provides a glossary of definitions composed by Stonewall. Please be aware some of the terms are not widely accepted or they are opposed by parts of the LGBT+ community. Please be mindful that it is a member's right to identify how they feel comfortable doing so.

www.stonewall.org.uk/list-lgbtq-terms





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