



**CWU**  
**DISABILITY**  
**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

Email: [equality&education@cwu.org](mailto:equality&education@cwu.org)

# FOREWORD

Welcome to the new Disability Toolkit. This toolkit is designed to offer support and guidance to any representatives who have an interest in disability rights within the workplace.

The CWU has Regional Disability Leads who you will be able to network with and we strongly recommend this.

Most Branches will also have an Equality Officer in position and they too will be able to work with you in progressing disability-related issues.

Although not in rule, there are some Branches that have adopted Disability Officer roles and we support these proactive measures.

In addition, the Equality, Education and Development Department are always on hand to offer assistance.

We hope you find this toolkit useful.

## THE ROLE OF THE DISABILITY LEAD

The Disability Leads role is primarily to support members who have underlying health issues, which impact their work or wider society. It is also an opportunity to offer guidance to other Union Reps who may require assistance with a case that involves a disability matter. There will also be opportunities to campaign and raise awareness on various health-related matters.

A guide to your role is illustrated below (the list is not exhaustive):

- Raising awareness about issues affecting people with a visible or hidden disability.
- Reporting to your branch/regional equality committee on relevant disability issues.
- Keeping a log of disability issues – this can be industrial or wider society matters. This will help when you prepare a report for the Branch. Acting as a point of contact where necessary.
- Acting as a liaison between CWU HQ, NEC Disability Lead and the branch on issues concerning disability.
- Supporting and supplying information to members. Consider a quarterly newsletter or liaise with the Equality Officer, so to contribute to a wider Branch Equality publication.
- Attending CWU Conference, particularly on Equality Day and other events that will have a focus on disability issues/policies.
- Networking with other Disability Leads
- Encouraging members, where possible, to feel confident to disclose their disability.

## WORKING WITH YOUR BRANCH

Understanding how your Branch runs is very important. To help you become more effective locally and within your branch, below are some ideas that may assist you:

- Request from your branch secretary or regional secretary a copy of the branch constitution rules and policies, including any branch/regional byelaws, which show other rules agreed at Branch/regional level.
- An up-to-date CWU rulebook
- Policy documents, showing what current CWU policy is on disability issues.
- A list of members who have a disability, hidden or otherwise that you represent. Remember GDPR compliance is essential. Liaise with the CWU Information Officer at HQ if in any doubt.
- Be aware of dates and times of Branch and Regional Equality Committee meetings so you can attend and play an active role in your Branch. If you are unable to attend then send your apologies and reasons for non-attendance.
- Produce a report for meetings.
- Ask your branch committee what they expect from you in your role.
- Get to know your committee members (their roles & responsibilities) and get their contact details including emails and telephone numbers.
- Work collaboratively with your Branch Equality Officer who will share a strong interest in your work.
- If you want to attend CWU courses/events, ask permission/seek guidance from your branch secretary.
- Attend Regional Equality Committee meetings. Liaise with your Branch Secretary so they are aware.
- Attend Conferences when possible, again liaising with your Branch.
- Consider setting up a branch Disability Facebook page and encourage members to join or utilise other social media platforms.



## MAKING CHANGES

In your Branch you will have the ability to submit motions linked to disability issues. More information on this is available on the Q&A section of this toolkit.

Branch motions should be relevant to issues within your branch or wider afield when it comes to the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

There are courses in the CWU education programme that help in this respect and you should check with the Education department to see what is available. Email the department at [equality&education@cwu.org](mailto:equality&education@cwu.org) for more information.



## CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVISM

A key part of your role will be to promote campaigns which support people with a disability.

For example, the need to encourage people to disclose their disabilities, so we can build a more accurate picture of our CWU membership.

The campaign to fight against disability discrimination is something that is close to the heart of the CWU. There will be opportunities throughout the year to attend and support meetings linked to these issues and you should liaise with your branch/region accordingly.

Other issues, which would involve intersectional engagement, could include working with other equality leads on matters linked to health. For example, the CWU has worked closely with the ACLT (African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust) as the number of bone marrow donors in BAME communities has always been significantly lower to that of 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.



## CONSIDER HOSTING AN EVENT?

- Hold a discussion group or a meeting to find out what issues are of interest to your members – or you could run an online poll?
- Consider holding drop-in information sessions where members and potential recruits can get more information about CWU and its various officers/Branch staff.
- Look at holding events around disability. Remember that the principle of disability awareness is 365 days a year, so this gives you a lot of flexibility when hosting an event.
- If you host an event please make sure it is as accessible as possible. We encourage the use of BSL interpreters where appropriate.
- Utilise CWU notice boards and ensure the information is kept up-to-date and accurate.

## DISABILITY HISTORY MONTH (DHM)

While we understand that disability focus should be 365 days a year we know it's important to highlight Disability History Month. This normally takes place between November and December so you could have an event that coincides with DHM. The Equality, Education & Development Month can offer ideas and support in this respect.

Speak with your Branch/Region if you are considering hosting an event or working with other Equality leads; you may want to do a collaborative event.

For more info on awareness days linked to disability please use this link: <https://abilitynet.org.uk/disability-and-accessibility-related-events-calendar>





## FREQUENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q** How does the union make policies?

**A** The CWU is a democratic organisation that creates policy through motion-based annual conferences.

Branches and Regional Committees are entitled to submit up to 3 motions to General Conference. 1 of the 3 Regional Committee motions are reserved for Equality.

**Q** There are so many acronyms used in the union how do I know what they mean?

**A** We understand that it can sometimes be difficult to get used to some of the language and terms that are used in the CWU. Access the CWU's jargon buster using the link below to help you understand the meanings of the most commonly used CWU terms and acronyms

<https://unlock.cwu.org/cwu-jargon-buster/>

**Q** What training is available to me that is linked to disability-related issues?

**A** You can contact the Equality, Education & Development department for the up-to-date courses that are available. We have Disability Awareness and Neurodiversity courses that can be organised within your region if there is sufficient interest.

**Q** Where can I find my branch rule book?

**A** A You can obtain a copy of your branch rulebook by contacting your branch secretary or branch chairperson. Each branch will have bespoke rules on how the branch is governed, however the minimum standards are set out in the branch model constitution which can be accessed using the link below:

<https://unlock.cwu.org/resource/rules-and-model-constitutions/>

**Q** As a CWU representative dealing with disability related issues, can I have access to my branch membership list?

**A** You are not automatically granted membership access. Only Branch Secretaries have automatic access to branch membership information. However, you can ask your branch secretary to distribute communications on your behalf or assist you in mapping relevant data, so you know where members with disabilities are based.

**Q** Does the branch have to give me release and financial help?

**A** The CWU rulebook states the following regarding financial help for equality officers:

**Rule 6.8.2(e) states:**

*"Branches must allocate sufficient funds to ensure Branch representation and participation at Equality conferences and events".*

**Rule 11.6.1 states:**

*"Each Branch shall be responsible for its own funds for meeting the following expenses;*

a) All Conference expenses including subsistence, travel and loss of pay;

b) Regional and Industrial based Committee expenses including travel and

Subsistence;

c) Travel and subsistence for all education courses;

d) Travel and subsistence for national briefings;

e) Visits to HQ requested by the Branch"

This means that you must work with your branch in order to obtain funds. The amount of funding you will receive depends on the decision made by the branch finance committee, so it is important that you make your case and provide enough detail to explain what the funding request is for and what the benefits are.







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