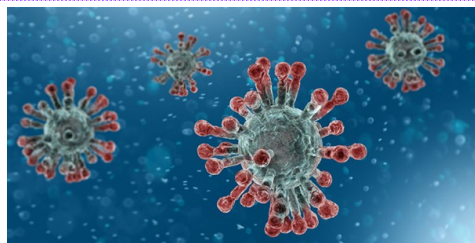


UNISON Community and Voluntary Organisations Branch Equalities and Coronavirus COVID-19

"Equality is an issue **everyone** faces in the workplace"



Coronavirus COVID-19 has shaken up the world and affected all of us in different ways. Many of us will have known someone who has had the virus and some of us will know someone who has died from it. Everyone's life has been affected in some way but some groups of workers have been impacted more than others.

The disproportionate impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, (BAME), groups has quite rightly been highlighted in the media. However other groups have also been adversely impacted. In this Newsletter we are highlighting some of these issues. These articles have been put together by the Branch's recently elected Equalities officers.

We now have Branch Committee Officers for Black Members, Disabled Member, LGBT+ Members, Women Members and Young Members.

[Important COVID-19 advice on how to return to work safely is available here!](#)

Our Equalities officers want to hear from you.

Are you a Black member (any member who is BAME)? A disabled member? A woman? An LGBT+ member? Under 27? Over 55 or 60+ If you answered yes to any of these questions, our Equalities Officers need to hear from you.

Tell us what we can do to support you by completing our short, anonymous survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BRYV382>

BLACK MEMBERS & COVID-19



The pandemic has left many of us feeling vulnerable to the disease and our members in the community and voluntary sector that are frontline staff even more so. As time has gone on we have learnt that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected the Black community and in particular black men.

The figures are startling with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) providing that although nearly 90% of deaths involving COVID-19 are among white people, it was found that they have a lower rate of death when compared to most other ethnic groups. ONS went on to confirm that the mortality rate involving COVID-19 was highest among black males at 255.7 deaths per 100,000 population compared to white males at 87.0 deaths per 100,000. ONS also looked at the figures for women and found the rate was highest for black females at 119.8 and the lowest among white females, at 52 per 100,000 population. The missing 'Beyond the data' part of Public Health England's review of COVID-19 impact on Black communities [has now been published](#)

Within our Branch and across UNISON we are requesting a constructive approach from employers in addressing the concerns of our Black members and COVID-19. Employers should ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are being followed to ensure the safety of our Black members and that staff are consulted with throughout the process.

Find Coronavirus COVID-19 advice here:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/health-care/big-issues/covid-19-advice-health->

#BlackLivesMatter



Continued from page 1

We are asking for feedback from you as to your experience with your employer in carrying out risk assessments. It will be useful to have examples of good practice approaches and resources or barriers and problems you may have experienced. Please send your feedback to info@unisoncvob.org.uk

What has been well documented in the media and what some of you have experienced first-hand is the lack of PPE has been concerning. The supply of PPE has meant that front line staff have been put at risk of COVID-19 and Black communities in particular.

If you have concerns about PPE, please follow the following steps in order to address the issue;

- Ask for a risk assessment to be carried out
- Write to your manager if guidance is not followed
- Write to your manager telling them why lack of PPE or other failure to follow guidance is making you unsafe
- Write to your manager telling them you have taken the above steps
- Email your manager's manager and HR/H&S to inform them the danger continues despite all your efforts.
- Our Branch has provided useful guidance on PPE and how to address any concerns you may have with your employers with the lack of PPE. Please see link below <https://unisoncvob.org.uk/2020/04/09/ppe-advice-for-community-and-voluntary-organisation-staff/>

UNISON is calling on the UK government to take action on the "systemic structural racism" that has been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The publication of the Public Health England's report on 02 June 2020 did not make any recommendations as to how to address the disparities in social and health inequalities in the Black community is a huge disappointment. You may wish to read an interesting blog post on the topic by Gloria Mills, UNISON Equalities National Secretary <https://www.unison.org.uk/blogs/2020/06/blog-major-disappointment-just-latest-black-people/>

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis has stated that "*The government must do all it can to protect those people who are more at risk*". Please see article that contains Dave Prentis' letter to the PM <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2020/06/address-inequality-protect-black-workers-covid-19-says-unison/>



UNISON is committed to addressing racial inequality to support our members and this has been further illustrated with UNISON supporting Black Lives Matter movement following the tragic murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. George Floyd has placed a spotlight firmly on racial inequality globally. UNISON is committed to support our Black members in the workplace and the wider community to fight racial inequality and discriminatory practises.

Find out more about UNISON Black members;

<https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/black-members/>

Contact the Branches Black Members Officers;

blackmembers@unisoncvob.org.uk

New Advice from Unison– [Covid19 and Black People Important COVID-19 advice on how to return to work safely is available here!](#)

[COVID-19 Risk Assessment template is here.](#)

Your Branch needs you!

We are looking for new Health and Safety Reps in every workplace. This is especially important now to make sure employers know and follow their obligations to keep you safe at work. If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Health and Safety Rep contact the Branch: info@unisoncvob.org.uk

Welcome from your 2020 CVOB Disabled Members Reps (Job share) Toby Morrison and Charlotte Hailey-Watts

Toby Morrison

"I am one of the Disabled Members' Reps on Branch Committee. I have about a decade's worth of experience representing the views of people with additional needs. Five years worth of that experience was with NUS as the Disabled Students' Rep at Coventry University Students Union (one year sitting on NUS National Disabled Students' Committee).

My undergraduate studies centred around the charity sector - I studied Applied Community and Social Studies, which ended with a dissertation entitled "A detailed study into the social impact of Tory-led welfare reforms affecting people with disabilities in the United Kingdom since 2010". I have a real passion for the sector and ensuring the voices of our members of all abilities are heard and that all employees have their rights upheld."



Charlotte Hailey-Watts

"I am a drug and alcohol Recovery Coordinator in the social care sector and freelance Artist and Arts tutor. I also worked with children and adults with learning disabilities for many years and am a trained Makaton signer. I have two largely "hidden" disabilities and long-term Mental Health issues. This has contributed to a strong interest in accessibility and improving conditions and rights for disabled people working in our sector and am currently contributing to a sickness policy review at my current workplace, campaigning for disability leave.

I am passionate about putting long-term Mental Health conditions on the agenda as disabilities and increasing employer awareness and policy around these, not to mention that the majority of those with a physical disability also have mental health issues.

I am excited to be job-sharing this role with Toby and am looking forward to continue to make progress on these issues within the Greater London CVOB branch."

As officers we advocate for the social model of disability, which is self-defined and we use the terms people with disabilities and disabled people interchangeably in this article in recognition of different preferences.



Disability and COVID-19

We feel it is important to acknowledge that COVID-19 has impacted personally and professionally disproportionately for those with underlying health conditions and disabilities and at UNISON CVOB we are in your corner for advice. This includes issues with obtaining the "reasonable adjustments" required by law have also been particularly common for those homeworking who have had to fight to be recognised in some cases or receive the support required by the Access to Work scheme at home. We also recognise that "return to work" action plans may be putting mental and physical pressure on people with disabilities/ disabled people, particularly those who may not have been placed in the shielding group such as people with long-term Mental Health conditions.

This is all particularly significant in our sector as there is statistical evidence that people working in social care are more likely to contract the virus with an even further increased risk for those who are BAME.

As a branch committee we have now put together a template document that will support people in vulnerable groups to advocate to return to work safely including a check list and advisory risk assessment. [You can find it here.](#)

Branch stats show that we currently have 209 members that identify as disabled/ have a disability. Please be advised that this is self-defined and you can update this information online at any time. We are looking at developing accessible socials either online or eventually in person for disabled members/ members with disabilities to share experiences, meet others in the sector and share ideas for what you want from our branch.

We are interested in improving the consideration of accessibility of meetings in both physical and participation terms and looking into the option of rolling out disability and accessibility training for the committee of our branch to improve awareness and ensure best practice.

Please feel free to get in touch with us with questions or comments at: disabledmembers@unisoncvo.org.uk



Coronavirus Covid-19 impact on LGBT+

Coronavirus COVID-19 has disproportionately affected minorities and disadvantaged groups. This trend has sadly been evident amongst LGBT+ individuals.

LGBT+ people are at greater risk due to a number of factors. The LGBT+ community is disproportionately impacted by HIV, and for those with a compromised immune system the risks of the pandemic are deadly. Rates of smoking are also higher in the LGBT+ community, a factor which is likely to increase pneumonia caused by the Coronavirus. And as with many other marginalised communities, LGBT+ people may be less likely to access healthcare, often due to fear of LGBT-phobia.

For trans individuals, this has been a particularly difficult time. The LGBT Foundation has received numerous reports from trans and non-binary people being denied access to prescribed and scheduled hormone injections, resulting in many people going without the medication they need and are entitled to.

Waiting lists for gender clinics across the country before the pandemic were already excruciatingly long. The impact of COVID-19 will only make this situation worse, resulting in trans people waiting too long for the treatment or support they need. Lockdown has exacerbated the isolation older LGBT+ people face, and prevented people of all ages from accessing vital support networks. This month should have been a time for taking to the streets for Pride, instead many LGBT+ people may be stuck in accommodation with LGBT-phobic family members or unable to visit the spaces where they feel safe and open to be themselves.

LGBT+ people are more likely to have poor mental health. With normal routines disrupted, and a lack of face-to-face support available, lockdown is likely to have impacted on the mental

health of many LGBT+ people. The NHS' psychological support services are already overstretched and oversubscribed, making support harder to access.

Some existing prejudices have been reinforced by COVID-19. A highly discriminatory rule bans sexually active LGBT+ + from giving blood. The pandemic has led to the rightful removal of some existing discriminatory and archaic rules, such as not being able to take the birth control pill at home - however this urgency has not been extended to other discriminatory legislation.

Despite the call for healthy individuals who have recovered from COVID-19 to donate their blood and the potentially lifesaving antibodies they have developed, this ban continues to prevent LGBT+ people from helping save lives and contribute to the development of vital treatments at a time of national emergency.



Links:

Stonewall COVID-19 Help and Advice: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/covid-19-help-and-advice>

Research by the LGBT Foundation on COVID-19 and the LGBT+ community: <https://lgbt.foundation/coronavirus/impact>

UNISON LGBT+ members: <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/lgbt/>

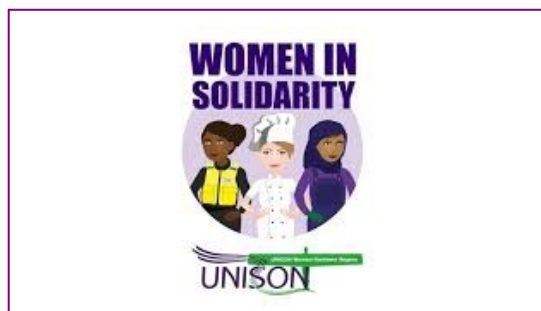
Contact the Branch LGBT+ Officer :

lgbt+members@unisoncvob.org.uk

Important COVID-19 advice on how to return to work safely is available here!

Support trans workers

The past few months have been challenging for everybody, but some issues have affected trans workers specifically. In addition to coping with the challenges brought by COVID-19 and the inevitable increase in waiting times to access hormone treatment and for gender confirming surgery, trans workers have also been confronted with Transphobia in the press and online as well as a potential roll-back to their rights under the Equality Act. To our trans members: we are here for you and we stand with you. To all members who aren't trans: please show your support for your trans colleagues and please speak out on Transphobia.



Covid-19 and Women in the workplace

Our Branch membership is 73% female with the vast majority of these working on the frontline in social care putting them at much higher risk than others of contracting the virus. With a large number of those working in Social Care coming from a BAME background this also gives them a higher risk of being seriously affected if they contract the virus.

[UNISON's article on Equalities](#) states; "In the social care workforce, over 85% are women, with many Black and migrant workers; a sixth of social care workers in England are not originally from the UK."

The work that mainly women carry out; care, cleaning, catering, teaching assistant, are all roles where it is much harder for them to maintain Social Distance, again putting them at greater risk from the virus. They are also as a result of this more likely to be affected by the lack of PPE that has been seen across many front-line services.



As well as being on the front-line in the Health and Care sector Women are in the majority of cases the main care provider for children at home. This adds additional challenges either around arranging childcare as schools and nurseries close or home-schooling for those working from home or working nights and caring for children during the day.

As tensions rise in the home many women have seen an increase in violent and abusive behaviour from their partners as domestic violence incidents have increased.

Pregnant women are also at High Risk during this time and employers need to take this into consideration without impacting on their pay or maternity pay. Pregnant women with Heart Conditions are at extremely High Risk and should be Shielding.

There is more information on pregnant women and COVID-19 available here: <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues/pregnant-workers-covid-19/>



It is clear that Women have faced additional issues during this pandemic crisis. UNISON assistant general secretary Christina McAnea said: "Inequalities emerging through the pandemic are chilling evidence to support UNISON's demands on workplace rights and decent public services. We need them both now and in the future."

UNISON is calling on government to address issues of Equalities which have been further highlighted through this crisis.

More information can be found here; <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2020/05/covid-19-black-female-workers-impacted-rest/>

[Help and advice from those at risk of Domestic Abuse can be found here.](#)

<https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/>

Contact us: womenmembers@unisoncvo.org.uk

[Important COVID-19 advice on how to return to work safely is available here!](#)

Communications

The Branch now has a presence on social media. Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UnisonCVOB>

 <https://twitter.com/cvobunison?lang=en-gb>



Young Members and Coronavirus COVID-19

We're half way through 2020, still navigating our way out of a global pandemic and continuing momentum in our anti-racist activism. As lockdown restrictions ease and we focus on return to work, there's a lot of worry and uncertainty about what we're returning to—particularly for young people.

Figures show young workers were more likely to have lost their job, been furloughed, or had their pay cut during this crisis. The TUC's recent analysis ([full report here](#)) states that young workers (aged 25 and under) face the highest risk for job losses due to Covid-19. As young workers are overrepresented in the two industries that are at particular risk to job loss: food and accommodation services, arts and entertainment. The TUC is calling for a job guarantee scheme to stop those without work becoming long-term unemployed, with early access to the scheme for young workers. You can read more [here](#)

Young members make up 3.75% of our branch and in these deeply worrying times it's more important than ever we encourage young people to join and become more active in the union. We need to make sure our voices are heard as we tackle the challenges ahead.

UNISON are currently doing a [survey on the impact of young UNISON members](#), please follow [the Young Members Forum](#) and share your thoughts. You can also access UNISON's equality resources [here](#).

Please do reach out to the branch if you're a young member and need anything at all:
youngmembers@unisoncvob.org.uk

Top Picks!

Recommended read: Anything from Gal-dem! However, this article about [Belly Mujingas death really hits home the importance of unions right now](#)

In Case you missed it: [Socialists of Colour BAME organising in Trade Unions panel event is now available on YouTube](#) includes a brief discussion on the importance of young people's involvement in unions.

Recommended Event: If you're interested in Union organising the [TUC are running a free festival of ideas](#) from 9th-11th July.

UNISON Young Members <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/young-members>

As a Branch we understand that for our members who have worked through the Pandemic and those who have or will be returning to work shortly will be concerned about returning to a safe workplace. [We have put together some important advice on how to return to work safely and it is available here.](#)

If you have been working throughout this advice is still relevant to you.



UNISON Political Fund and Labour Link Officer

The labour link officer ensures our branch members have their voice heard and that we play an active role building links with the Labour Party. That is why the UNISON political fund is so important to what UNISON do: The affiliated Political Fund helps us to get UNISON policies at the heart of the party. The non affiliated Political Fund helps support UNISON national campaigns and local ones that your branch itself will run such as local campaigns to stop a hospital closure. Getting our members voice heard has never been more important than ever during COVID-19 as many of our members have been on the frontline and deserve a pay rise. If you are a Labour link member then get in touch with me via email: labourlink@unisoncvob.org.uk.