



Regional Women's & Equalities Officer

Irish Executive Committee Report 15 April 2025

The following report outlines all equality initiatives and events which took place in the region during the first quarter of 2025. I am attending the next IEC, if you have any questions relating to this report or alternatively, please email taryn.trainor@unitetheunion.org.

REGIONAL EQUALITY COMMITTEES

All regional equality committees will be re-constituted in May and the dates for these conferences have all been set. If you have one of the equality characteristics and would like to become more involved, please send me an e-mail.

I organised on-line Getting Involved awareness sessions in January for members who were interested in joining the equality committees and wanted to know what it entails. These were run jointly with the Welsh region and facilitated on-line in short sessions at lunch time and early evening.

EQUALITY REPS

Unite are still committed and campaigning for recognition for Equality reps. We need more equality reps with recognition in our workplaces and we need this written into company recognition agreements to ensure time off. All newly implemented workplace policies should be uploaded on work voice pay for reference. All newly constituted branches should ensure they have nominated equality reps and arrange for these reps to complete the relevant training currently provided by our Education Department. Equality rep training is being facilitated by our education department in the North and if anyone is interested in completing training, contact lisa.robinson@unitetheunion.org. The Education department in the ROI has developed a unity over division anti-racism module for workplace rep courses and an extremely useful resource booklet entitled 'eradicating division and racial intolerance from the workplace'. They are also providing a two hour module on domestic Abuse for Rep training.

We currently have 58 Equality reps in Northern Ireland and 40 in the Republic of Ireland. Equality rep handbooks are available on the Unite website.

Policies relating to equalities e.g. parental leave menopause etc are available to select on Work Voice pay when you are generating your company pay claim.

UNITE WOMEN

The Region sent a delegation to the ICTU Women's Seminar in Dundalk. The speakers at the event were Kudsia Batool – TUC Head of Equalities and Aakanksha Surve – ICTU Black Leadership Programme & NUJ. There were table discussions on tackling the rise of the far right in our workplaces, trade unions and communities.

The fringe sessions were from Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP) – Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign – what can trade unions do and Trade Unions & Civil Society: Working Together to Combat Racism: David Carroll, ICTU & Philomena Obasi, INAR.

There was a very informative presentation on Addressing the Role of Pornography in the Pandemic of Violence Against Women and Girls, Ruth Breslin, Director, The Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute. The two-day seminar finished with a panel discussion on misogyny, hate and the far right – the role of the trade union movement.

International Women's Day

Unite members attended the international women's day marches organised in Belfast and Dublin on the 8th March. The National Women's officer Alison Spencer-Scragg organised an on-line event entitled Women in Unite demanding action, with one of the topics zero tolerance to sexual harassment.

End violence against women

The Power to Change is the strapline of a new campaign launched in collaboration with the Department of Justice and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland.

Men and boys across Northern Ireland are being asked to check and change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards women and girls. Challenge their peers and have the confidence to step in safely to put a stop to behaviour that might put their friends at risk of offending.

The campaign will highlight two important elements:

Challenging attitudes & behaviours – calling on men to consider their responsibility and how their actions affect others.

Active Bystanders – empowering men and the wider community with the knowledge and skills to safely intervene when they see someone carrying out inappropriate actions or making unwanted comments.

A series of graphics and four scenario-based videos showcase on social media through targeted ads aimed at men and boys. It will also be visible in local communities on buses, in washrooms of hospitality venues, digital posters, billboards and across the entire police estate.

A dedicated website has been developed to support this campaign:

<https://powertochange.info/>

This houses information explaining inappropriate behaviours towards women and girls in our society, providing tools on how to recognise and address it

safely and take a stand against them. Interactive elements have been included.

In the UK one in eight women killed by men in the last 15 years were aged over 70, figures show, with a specialist charity reporting a growing number of older victims of domestic abuse seeking help. A landmark report from the femicide census delves into the death's of 2000 women killed by men. It shows that 262 women over the age of 70 have been killed since 2009. The report also highlights that nearly one in ten of all women who died at the hands of men in the UK over the past 15 years were mothers killed by their sons. The statistics have led to calls for the government to take specific action to tackle matricide, raise awareness of the risk of sons to mothers and provide support for victims. The 2,000 women report by the Femicide consensus shows that mental ill health was a factor in 58% of matricide cases.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

The Irish Health Minister has said she is trying to find a resolution to the delay in the roll out of free Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). The Irish Pharmacy Union and the Department of Health have been at loggerheads about which is at fault for a delay in implementing a national plan, which was due to begin in January. HRT is a medicine-based treatment used to relieve symptoms of the menopause and perimenopause.

Right to Choose

Nothing to report but activists remain vigilant, especially with the situation in USA and GB.

ADHD

I wrote to the Irish health minister noting due to the ongoing gender gap in childhood diagnosis of ADHD – with four to five times more boys than girls being diagnosed – women are especially likely to find themselves struggling with unexplained symptoms and seeking a diagnosis in adulthood. However, adults seeking to obtain assessment and treatment are often frustrated by the lack of accessible services. This means that those seeking support may be financially unable to access assessment and support services, since the cost of private services can be prohibitive. Delayed assessment and treatment can result in individuals struggling socially, academically and in the workplace as well as impacting on mental health.

CAMPAIGNS

Our Get Me Home Safely campaign asks employers to extend their duty of care to staff's commute to and from work. It encourages reps to conduct a workplace survey, identify any risks and ensure that employers take action to eliminate risks. Additional political and industrial demands of the campaign for safe travel for women, and ultimately all workers, are available from the excellent resources that can be downloaded from: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/get-me-home-safely-campaign>

Domestic violence is a workplace issue, and we ask all activists to look at Unite's model policy on supporting staff who are experiencing this and start negotiations

on its introduction in their company. The posters, model policy and guidance are on our website which can be accessed here: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/sectors/women>. ROI members refer to the ROI website.

Period Dignity

Please keep the issue on your collective bargaining agendas and encourage your branches to donate to their local charities and youth clubs. Posters and pledges are available on the Unite website.

Meeting/Conferences

I have attended the following meetings during this quarter.

- Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC/ICTU)
- Women's Committee meetings
- Northern Ireland Committee meetings
- NIWBG meetings
- RTA
- NIAPAN

In Great Britain from 6 April 2025, thousands of working families will gain a new right to **neonatal care leave and pay**, giving parents of babies in neonatal care the ability to take up to 12 weeks of leave, with pay available to eligible employees. Unfortunately, this is not applicable to Northern Ireland yet but we are confident it will be included in the new Employment Bill.

The Irish Government has extended the eligibility of widow and widowers' pension to co-habiting couples. This means couples who had lived together for two years or more and had children together will qualify and for those who did not have children together, they will qualify where they had lived together for five years or more. The Contributory Pension payments will be backdated to the date of the Supreme Court judgment on 22 January 2024.

UNITE DISABLED MEMBERS

Department for Communities officials commissioned the Department of Finance's Business Consultancy Service to undertake a review of the Social Inclusion Strategies Co-Design Process. Several Co-design Group members participated in this review. Minister Lyons has announced that he is proceeding with this strategy.

The regional Disabled members conference takes place in Dublin on Thursday 1 May and Suzy Byrne from the National Advocacy service for people with disabilities is the invited speaker.

UNITE LGBT+

The regional LGBT+ conference takes place on Wednesday 30 April with a speaker from a group putting pressure on Prides not to invite political parties in N.I who supported the banning of puberty blockers to trans adolescents. The committee feels very strongly about this issue and put out a social media noting that pride is a protest and those who fail to support trans people should not be invited.

A letter was sent to branch secretaries asking them to support their local prides this year. All district offices are going to be displaying posters and flags this year.

UNITE BAEM

We arranged 'Getting involved sessions' in January for our BAEM members so they can understand what is entailed by being a member of the BAEM committee. The BAEM conference is scheduled for Tuesday 29 April in Belfast. Please encourage all Black, Asian Ethnic minorities to attend.

RETIRED MEMBERS

The retired members branches should have all held their AGMs by now. The retired members co-ordinating committee takes place in the Ballybot, Newry on Friday 9 May with speakers from Age NI.

In N. Ireland our retired branches have been involved in the on-going Winter fuel allowance campaign being led by the Organising department and a winter fuel allowance committee. The campaign to defend the winter fuel payment in Northern Ireland secured pledges from all 9 main political Parties of the Executive. A mitigation payment of £100 per household for all Pensioners was agreed and won by the campaign. Following a further meeting with the minister of communities (Gordon Lyons) our retired members committee highlighted that under section 75 of the NI 1998 Agreement an EQIA (Equality impact assessment) should have been carried out before any cuts implemented. The DWF Committee and UFWE team drafted a response and ran stalls in hospitals, sent it out to all retired members and Branches, resulting in thousands of angry people and their families signing them. The responses were handed in to the minister in February and the activists along with the Regional Secretary held speeches beforehand outside his office.

YOUNG MEMBERS

The young members conference will take place in Belfast on 16 April. The youth co-ordinator along assisted by committee activists, have arranged telebanking of young members to encourage them to attend.

The Get Me Home Safely Campaign materials are available on the Unite website and on the link above. This campaign is very relevant to young members who depend on public transport to get to and from work.

CYW/NFP

The NI ICTU group of unions are still meeting and preparing to run a campaign seeking fair pay in the Com/Vol sector, starting with the restoration of current NJC pay. Some employers have not received an adequate budget

to implement any annual cost of living rises. Training for activists within the sector on organising has been arranged to take place in May.

Department of Education is currently carrying out a review of youth services in N. Ireland and we have two reps sitting on the panel and subgroups. JNC pay award has been agreed by union side for 2024.

JNC pay increase for 24/25 has been agreed and is due to be paid in March for Education Authority JNC employees.

SAINSBURYS

The AGM will take place at the start of April but still having huge difficulties securing reps in stores. The equal pay case is on-going but is looking more positive now that Asda has lost its Supreme Court appeal in its workers' equal pay fight.

REGISTERED CHILDMINDERS

The NI childminders have a smaller child ratio than their counterparts in the rest of the UK, meaning they are allowed to mind less children. They are campaigning to get this ratio increased. As a result of the campaign the Department of Health has launched a consultation on the ratios of adult to child in a childminding setting. The branch is currently working on their response and encourages as many members as possible to respond, as this will be a huge opportunity to get the ratio increased.