

Making our LGBT group more inclusive by changing our name to LGBT+ - Frequently asked questions

Why do we want to change our name?

The change of name to LGBT+ is aimed at making our current group more inclusive. Young people are increasingly identifying with a sexual orientation and/or gender identity that do not currently fit into the limited LGBT definition. As a trade union UNISON has a proud history of inclusion and diversity and we feel in order to continue this we need to ensure we are relevant to all members.

Who will be included within the +?

Anybody who may be at risk of prejudice or discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The 'plus' aims to include the wide spectrum of groups and identities that make up the LGBT umbrella.

Will this mean the National LGBT Committee seeking more seats on other committees?

No, it will just make the current LGBT group more inclusive and representative of our membership.

If the 'plus' includes non-binary people will they be eligible to stand for reserved women's seats on committees?

No, as a non-binary person does not identify as either male or female then they will not be able to do this however they will be able to stand for any seats designated as being open to the general membership.

What is the benefit to the wider membership?

Changing to include the 'plus' will make us more relevant to many younger people who do not feel that the current LGBT acronym is relevant to them. This will make us more attractive to them as a trade union and has the potential to create new members.

The change will also bring our identity in line with other trade union LGBT+ groups and LGBT+ organisations.

I am an LGBT ally, can I join?

Sorry but no. The group is for those who individually identify as LGBT+, although please do remember we value your continued support.

Will it cost the union more money to change the name?

No, any costs are minor, such replacing stock items of literature etc and will be done so as cost effectively as possible and within existing budgets.

What is the cost of not changing the name?

Already a certain section of the LGBT+ community do not feel our existing group is welcoming to them simply because of the first impressions created by having the limiting LGBT acronym. This may make other unions with LGBT+ groups appear more relevant and attractive to them and we will have lost the opportunity of gaining their membership.

Is this a way for the National LGBT Committee to get extra seats on the NEC?

No. The National LGBT Committee does not currently have any seats on the NEC and has no desire to seek any. At our 2018 National LGBT Conference this matter was debated by the membership who overwhelmingly voted against seeking NEC seats. We believe our interests are best served through the Self Organised Group structure.

Will it aid recruitment?

Yes, our relevance and ability to recognise and represent the views of more people will increase our recruitment potential while at the same time increase our wealth of knowledge and our activism.

Why not just increase the letters in the acronym, like LGBTQIA or something similar?

By adding the 'plus' we are future proofing our union and our group as language and the way people define themselves are constantly evolving. If we were to limit ourselves to one fixed definition (as we currently do) then we are at risk of becoming irrelevant to some people in potentially a very short space of time. If this were the case then we would need to go back to LGBT and National Delegate Conferences every time we sought to update our name.

Why do you need Branches to support this rule change?

Our group learnt some very hard lessons at the turn of this century when we sought to change from a Lesbian and Gay Group to LGBT. When the motion was first taken to National Delegate Conference we didn't manage to get enough branches on board with us and it took a number of years to achieve the name change (2005).

We need 2/3rds of the vote at National Delegate Conference to bring in this rule change and we would hope to do this at the first attempt with support from as many Branches and Regions as possible.

How can I assist UNISON LGBT in making this rule change happen?

It's easy really;

Publicise – Tell your members and colleagues about the proposed change and the reasons for it.

Prioritise – Seek to get support from your Branch Committee and when the NDC motions prioritisation process starts lobby your committee to prioritise this rule change.

Participate – When you or your colleagues go to conference vote in favour of the rule change.

Who can I go to for more information?

There are a number of people who can tell you more about this matter, they are;

- Regional Reps to the National LGBT Committee
- Regional Chairs of your LGBT Self Organised Group
- Your Regional LGBT Officer (details available on the UNISON website)
- Your Branch LGBT or Equalities Officer

Glossary

National LGBT Committee	National lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members's committee
Gender binary	Non-binary people do not identify as solely male or female. They may define themselves as both, neither or something entirely different
NEC	National executive council – elected body of lay members
Self Organised Groups	Groups facing discrimination meeting and organising to determine their collective agenda and feeding it into the union's structure
National Delegate Conference	Supreme decision making body of UNISON – annual conference of branch delegates, at which the self-organised groups have representation.
LGBT Conference	Annual conference for LGBT members in UNISON

To find out more about UNISON LGBT self organisation

- Visit our webpages www.unison.org.uk/out
- Ring UNISON*direct* 0800 0857 857
- Email out@unison.co.uk
- Write to Carola Towle, national officer – LGBT equality, 130 Euston Road, London, NW1

Factsheet

UNISON
EQUALITY

2AY

February 2019