

# EQUALITY NEWS

Autumn 2017,  
Issue 3

## Welcome!

Welcome to the third Regional Equality newsletter!

Going from strength to strength, we've more new contributors to this newsletter, members like you. Thanks to those for taking the time to share your views and events. Hopefully many of you will also feel inspired to write in. *Please do so by 24 November 2017 - see page 13 for info.*

In this issue you'll find views on increasing automation and the impact on workers and work, and negative reforms in special education needs at schools. There are also news and updates from all of our self-organised groups (SOGs) - Race, Young London, Shout LGBT+, Ability and Sisters.

You can get involved by joining any or all of our dynamic equality self-organised groups (see page 12). Don't forget equality dates for your diary (pages 5 and 15).

Finally, we dedicate this newsletter to our much missed, inspiring fighter for equalities, GMB President, Mary Turner, MBE, CBE - a staunch, trade unionist whose legacy lives on, especially through the many she inspired and encouraged. Our deepest condolences go to her family, from GMB London Region Equality Forum, SOGs and local equality forums.



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## Survivor pension benefits victory

**Carl Banks,  
GMB Shout LGBT+**

Poverty in old age, selling your home to pay for care, prejudice in care homes by some staff and residents, lack of understanding of the needs and experiences of older LGBT+ people ... I hope these will become increasingly things of the past for older LGBT+ people, all people.

You may say this is no different to any heterosexual person and you'd be right, kind of.

As a GMB LGBT+ activist, people have often said to me that LGBT+ people in the UK have no more legal battles to fight and you have the same protections and rights as heterosexual people. "Aha!", I would reply, "alas not so: for example, LGBT+ people face pensions discrimination over survivor pensions benefits." Baffled looks inevitably followed, swiftly pursued by disbelief and a cry for justice.

### Campaigning against pensions discrimination

Now, I'm relieved to say, I won't be using this example much more, perhaps anymore – for pensions at least. This is because, in July, John Walker won his five-year legal battle to secure equal pension benefits for his husband. He was supported by Liberty, the human rights charity.

This landmark case will change the lives of thousands of couples, and surviving partners, in the UK – as described in the first paragraph.

GMB Shout – our union's LGBT+ network - has campaigned for years to repeal this legalised discrimination once and for all, and GMB has supported this action at many levels – negotiations with the government, Congress motions, etc.

### The case

Just like you and me, John Walker paid into his employer's pension scheme, doing so for more than 20 years before retiring in 2003. He and his husband entered into a civil partnership (CP) in January 2006, having registered on the first day it was legally possible to do so, later converting their CP into a marriage.

John's employer, supported by the Department for Work and Pensions, argued that, should John die, his husband should not receive the same survivor benefits he would be entitled to if he were a woman. This would have left John's husband with a pension of only a few hundred pounds a year. If he were married to a woman, she would receive £45,000 a year for the rest of her life.

### Five-year battle

From the Employment Tribunal to the Supreme Court, John Walker and Liberty have been fighting for equal pension benefits for five years. As John said after the judgment was announced, "Today's ruling is a victory for basic fairness and decency. Finally my husband and I can get on with enjoying the rest of our lives together."

The Supreme Court has ruled that an exemption in the Equality Act – letting employers exclude same-sex partners from spousal benefits paid into pension funds before December 2005 – is discriminatory and breaches EU equality laws. From now on, employers taking advantage of this exemption will be breaking the law.

### Workplace impact

Myself, GMB Shout and the national pensions officer will be discussing ways to provide advice and guidance for GMB members and reps on the impact and implementation of this ruling.

If you have any questions about any of this, feel free to email GMB Shout at: [info@gmbshout.net](mailto:info@gmbshout.net)

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## Hope not Hate and Unity over Division

**Taranjit Chana, GMB Race London**

GMB Race held its 3rd AGM on 15 July entitled 'Hope not Hate & Unity over Division'. We had an amazing response to our call for new members.

The new committee was elected to continue the amazing work of the outgoing committee who in the last 12 months organised a number of events and also engaged with various campaigns promoting the interests of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members.

We also supported other Self-organised groups in their campaigns too. The achievements of last year's outgoing committee included, amongst many others: producing a resource briefing for language requirement for public sector workers; submitted a response to the Labour Party Consultation on Race Equality; supported GMB Shout in replying to a LGBT consultation on mental health dealing with the issue of impact on BAME LGBT+ members; support for refugees with our solidarity trips to Calais.

Our Black History Month event in October 2016 was a resounding success taking place at Ealing Town Hall which was a fitting tribute to Jayaben Desai and her workers who in the late 1970's brought the establishment to its knees in West London - a forgotten history of black workers fighting for all workers!. The story of the Grunwick dispute has truly inspired us and continues to do so.

We had very special guests: Deniz and Mem (our vice chair, Fevzi Hussein's two inspiring children). Deniz spoke passionately and shared her views on racism, the plight of refugees and the Grenfell tragedy. She spoke about the important work of



**GMB Race campaigners**

GMB Race in tackling racism not only in the workplace but globally - a speech which not only inspired us all but left us thinking a future GMB Member and leader in the making to continue the fight against Race Inequality!!

We are pleased that we have a full(er) committee with a 50:50 gender balance!! The new GMB Race Committee 2017/2018 are as follows:

**Chair:** Taranjit Chana

**Vice Chair:** Fevzi Hussein

**Secretary:** Pushpa Makwana

**Treasurer:** Goodwin Akasie

**Communications Officer:** Robert Scott

**Organiser:** Dayna Edwin

**Members:** Patricia De Villa, Naome, Endryu De Villa, Nayara De Villa, Henry Agboola, Uma Kumaran, Uche Onwnbiko, Khevyn Lembjee and Lorna Gayle.

The first meeting of the new committee will take place on 23 August 2017 at GMB Euston and, here's to another 12 months of ensuring that Race is always on the agenda.

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Trade Union history is rooted in the fight for equality and rights – especially workers'. The past is an uneasy reminder of the unimaginable levels of unfairness the workforce was exposed to; be it dangerous working conditions, unscrupulous bosses, slave-like wages and virtually no autonomy.

Everywhere from armies to farms via dungeon-like mills, factories and hellish mines, workers have been, and in some places, continue to be, subjected to hideous conditions. The formations of unions catalysed the fight against exploitation and depravity.

### **Safeguarding the workforce**

We may reminisce proudly, remembering what unions have achieved in our quest for equality and rights, but must now look to the future and safeguard the workforce of tomorrow against the spectres of past injustice. There is an inescapable inevitability approaching us, the age of automation.

Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC) estimates that up to 30% of existing jobs will be susceptible to automation and artificial intelligence (AI) within the next 15 years – a frighteningly short amount of time. The sectors expected to be hit the hardest are areas such as transport and logistics, manufacturing and wholesale retail; apparently low skilled jobs mostly paying out mediocre wages. White-collar professionals mustn't rest too easy; advances in A.I. medical diagnostics, surgical robots, legal researching machines and many more herald relegation in a gamut of jobs.

While automation will almost certainly boost productivity, it could also widen income inequality further if not managed correctly. A larger portion of wealth would go to those with the skills needed to

## **Unions Can Lead the Discussion on Automation**

***Tony Scattergood, GMB Young London***

thrive in an ever more digital economy, leaving those lacking such knowledge and needing re-training behind. There is very little talk, if any at all, from Government on managing the transition to a new kind of workforce – and new approach to the fabled work-life balance. It is far from inconceivable that as job sectors fall to robots a three-day working week and Universal Income becomes the norm – or we can try a low wage, low skill gig economy with insufficient work to go around and massive poverty. These are the two extremes, and I know which I'd sooner be moving towards. These notions show automation and its potential fallout doesn't receive the attention it requires.

### **Addressing impact now**

This is where unions come in, bringing a much-needed conversation into the mainstream - and GMB can be the leading voice. We must begin addressing the impact automation will have on society and the implications of the mass unemployment that could ensue. It's imperative that we highlight this issue as often as we can and automation becomes a regular topic of conversation when we discuss issues our members face, or may expect to. It is a mighty task but one worth pursuing until it has been accomplished. The sheer weight of the situation that could unfold demands our wholesale efforts and attention.

We have protected workers and improved their rights for generations. Now, what a working life means is changing around us. It behoves unions to bring our experience to bear on this metamorphosis.

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**London Region Norfolk And Suffolk Sisters**  
**Come along to our meeting to plan our campaign for Care workers**

**JOIN THE FIGHT  
FOR OUR CARERS  
RIGHTS**

To join us  
Contact Trina on  
01603 626492 or  
[trina.hendrie@gmb.org.uk](mailto:trina.hendrie@gmb.org.uk)

**GMB@WORK**

**Next meeting**

**Wednesday 23rd August 2017**

**At 6:30pm**

**GMB,  
Ground Floor Suite 2, 9  
Norwich Business Park,  
Whiting Road,  
Norwich,  
NR4 6DJ.**



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## Measures to Make Misery

**Stephen Jones, GMB ability**

A very worrying trend has developed in the education system in my borough, the London Borough of Redbridge.

Like all boroughs, we have a number of schools specifically for children with special educational needs (SEN). They may have physical disabilities, but in many cases they may have multiple needs due to a number of genetic and other medical conditions, as well as different levels of learning disabilities.

One would assume that the SEN schools make adequate allowances for parents to bring their children to school as early and as promptly as they possibly can, considering the potential difficulties they may experience in doing so.

To some extent this has happened in the past and some schools have shown some flexibility as to when children's attendance at school was registered, i.e. if for some reason they were late coming in, or allowed to come in late by agreement, then their attendance was registered, regardless of the time of arrival at school.

But it looks as if all that is about to change because some of those schools are planning to become Academies. In pursuit of achieving that aim, they are proposing to impose new rules on parents of such often very severely disabled children, to bring them to school at a specified fixed time in the morning, regardless of the severity of the children's disabilities and problems, and regardless of how far they may live away from the school.

In fact, we are aware of the fact that some parents

of severely disabled children have been issued with hefty fines because of the late arrival of their child to school, and classed this as unauthorised absence. All the indications are that this is the way that things will be dealt with in future, i.e. if a very severely disabled child is brought to school after a specified time, the parents may be fined for alleged non-attendance of the child or children.

If implemented, these are draconian and ruthless measures which undoubtedly will cause untold misery, worries and potentially considerable additional financial burdens on families who can least afford them. It would truly be a travesty of justice.

They are also making it harder for those parents who are also working in schools, insisting they too turn up on time regardless of the personal difficulties they may have in getting their own SEN child to school.

We are also seeing a worrying trend of reducing the amount of money given to schools that have a specific 'unit' for pupils with a particular need, such as autism, speech and language, and sight or hearing loss.

Reducing the staff cannot only have a detrimental effect on the child's future but also on any staff and parents who need support because they too may have their own hearing loss, for example. This can cause an issue with discrimination under the Equalities Act.

The cuts in Education and the march towards Academisation can have serious knock-on effects to whole communities both economic and in terms of Equalities. This is just so typical of this government's attitude and lack of empathy towards working people. Ideology at all costs.

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## Haircut for an Inspiring Children's Cause

**Pushpa Makwana**

My name is Pushpa Makwana and I would like to share my story.

This time last year when I was on holiday I was watching TV when this advertisement appeared about making a donation to a Cancer charity. I went online to check what I could do to help support them.

What came to my mind was that I wanted to support children with cancer. I work with children as a Support staff member and I am aware what children go through. My heart goes out to them. But how could I help?

Hair! I have always been very attached to my long hair, so cutting it off would be a very emotional experience for me, but for children with cancer, I would fundraise for them.

I made my mind up to donate 14 inches of my hair, and I have booked an appointment with my hairdresser for 23 August and I am looking forward to donating my hair and fundraising for children with Cancer:

[www.littleprincesses.org.uk/](http://www.littleprincesses.org.uk/)

The Little Princess Trust "provides real hair wigs free of charge to children across the UK and Ireland to those who've sadly lost their own hair due to cancer treatment or any other illness.



**Pushpa - with hair!**

I've created my fundraising page for The Little Princess Trust and the link is here for further details: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Pushpa-Makwana1](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Pushpa-Makwana1)

You are welcome to donate. Thank you.

## Our Regional Equality Survey

**Sue Hackett, GMB London Regional Equality Officer**

Please complete this very short survey. This information is vital to our union in making sure that we are representative of our members and we are able to target relative information to the right groups on issues that affect them.

I appreciate some of the information may be sensitive to some of our members and I can assure you it is purely for the union's use only.

There is an option at the bottom of the form for you to indicate any networks you wish to belong to. You may tick as many boxes, you identify with, as you like. This will make sure that you get future equality information relevant to you.

Please make sure you put your membership number (if known) on the form; you will find it on your membership card.

Thank you very much for taking part and I look forward to hearing from you.

The equality survey is available at: <https://goo.gl/forms/qCj9a4iAFvxowUjr2>

For more information, contact the Equality Department:

Tel: 020 8202 8272.

E-mail: [equality.london@gmb.org.uk](mailto:equality.london@gmb.org.uk)

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## LGBT+ equality 50 years on

### *Carl Banks, GMB Shout LGBT+*

It's been hard not to miss the flurry of cultural and legal developments marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. The Act partially decriminalised homosexual acts between two men over the age of 21 years in private, in England and Wales.

### **Culture vultures**

The National Archives has created a special blog to access a range of records, resources and events, to better understand this landmark Act.

The BBC's 'Queer Britannia' season has had new dramas, insightful documentaries and a positive focus on LGBT+ people and their daily, and past experiences. (Catch up on iPlayer, if you can).

Tate Britain has had very popular exhibitions on gay artist, David Hockney, and until 1 October 2017, on 'Queer British Art 1861-1967'.

Closer to home, Hackney Pride 365 Queer Tours of London history walks have revealed stories of Hackney's queer history, "shedding light on the lives, spaces, identities, repression and resistance that form the backdrop of LGBTQI+ lives today."

### **Giddy up!**

Even the government has joined the barn dance. It has recently announced proposals "to deliver greater equality for the LGBT community". Greater equality? – a contradiction if ever I heard one!

Let it not be said that us trade unionists don't like a survey to make our views known! The government has ever so kindly opened that door

and welcomed all LGBT+ people (assuming that means us trade unionist folk too) to help shape future government policy. Feel free to tell May what you want for a better equal future at:

[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-lgbt-survey](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-lgbt-survey)

### **A question of self-recognition?**

Coming soon, will be the government's consultation on the Gender Recognition Act 2004. We're told that this will be a review of the 2004 Act in order to streamline and de-medicalise the process of legal recognition.

Your views will be sought via GMB Shout LGBT+ website, Facebook group and Twitter, and via GMB London region equality forum Facebook group. This will inform the final draft GMB national response. Feel free to email me at: [info@gmbshout.net](mailto:info@gmbshout.net)

### **Wrapping it all up in tinsel**

Reviewing the year and setting the pace for 2018, GMB Shout LGBT+ will be holding its AGM on Friday 1 December at GMB Euston. You are very welcome to join us in celebrating all we have done and revving up to the challenges to come.



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# PRIDE

SPEAKERS FROM 2-3PM AT FROGMOOR  
MARCH THROUGH TOWN CENTRE AT 3PM

AFTER PARTY! DRAG SHOW @ O'NEILLS  
FREE ENTRY - STARTING FROM 5PM

**AUGUST 26 2017**



High Wycombe  
**PRIDE**



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## GMB Women's Conference 2017

**Sue Hackett,**  
**GMB London Regional Equality Officer**



**Busy at conference**

GMB London Region held their second very successful Women's Conference earlier this year, we grew in numbers attending and were very encouraged by the amount of BAME women attending, I am hoping that will be a trend for all our equality groups.

The Women's Conference is aimed at all self-defining women in our region to take part, you don't have to be a branch official or workplace rep/shop steward to attend, although we do welcome all our reps to apply, look out for the application form and poster for next year, later in the year, you can nominate yourself to attend.

### **New skills**

All attendees were given the opportunity to take part in further training and GMB Sisters held their first ever women only Public Speaking and Speech Writing course in August 2017. What a great event this was; the feedback from members has been so very positive.

GMB Sisters have put in place a series of training going forward for the delegates.

**"Some Leaders are Born Women"**  
[Geraldine Ferraro](#)

Look out for the flyer for Women to apply to their SOGs (self-organised groups) to attend the National Women's Conference in Liverpool later this year or the Young Members Summit in Scotland.

**GMB National Women's Conference:**  
**deadline for applications is 8 September 2017:**  
<https://goo.gl/forms/jPFQRuIBNd5xQ5FG2>

## **Our Regional Equality Conference: Our biggest yet!**

We are gearing up for our Regional Equality Conference on 4 November 2017.

We've had a tremendous response from many of you wanting to be delegates.

If you would like to attend this conference next year, let your Branch know, and get involved! You'll get loads of support and we're sure you'll want to come back for more!



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## Soho Central Equality Project

*Sarah Hurley*

GMB's Soho Central Equality project and campaign has been incredibly active during the summer by attending London Pride, UK Black Pride, the Soho Society's Summer Fete and Waiters' Race where they had a stall.

Campaign material was entered into the TUC Trade Union Communication Awards 2017 in the section for best recruitment/ new member communication. In June, the project and campaign material was highly recommended by the TUC judges and then published in the TUC's Communications Awards 2017 booklet (page 19).

The Soho Central Campaign is going back on air on Soho Radio after meeting Amy Lamé so this is definitely a campaign to watch out for.



GMB at London Pride supporting the campaign



Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, Director of UK Black Pride and GMB Shout activist, supporting the campaign

### Keeping up-to-date

Following the campaign is so easy as you - get tweeted updates for you and your branch: @GMBSOHOCentral

The campaign is also surveying anyone who works in a bar, club or restaurant so please share this survey link with anyone you know working in one: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/gmbsohocentral](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/gmbsohocentral)

Thanks for supporting the recruitment campaign.

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[ ability ]

## GMB Disabled Members' Network

If you self-identify as disabled, we have just the group for you to get involved in. Join [ ability ] today:



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**GMB Shout!**  
lesbian gay bisexual trans +

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Web <http://gmbshout.net>



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## GMB SISTERS



A women's group for all who self-identify as women, join in with us if you can, you will be made more than welcome.



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## GMB Young London Progress Report

*Ryan Maynes, GMB Young London*



In the last month GMB Young London have been incredibly busy. We were present at the March for the NHS to protest against the Government's mishandling of our treasured health service where we were joined by other young members from across the country.

Furthermore, we have started promoting our own member created content that offers journalistic insight into inequality or to offer a political opinion on the issues that matter to our young members.

Most significantly however, we took the next step in our big campaign to unionise young workers by going undercover in Soho to learn about the working conditions experienced by young people in London's bar and restaurant

scene. Some of our findings truly highlight the struggle young people face trying to get by in London and it is up to us to bring an end to these exploitative practices. We were led by 6 full time GMB officials who taught us how to recruit and spread the GMB message to everyone within a mile radius.

### Election action

Lastly, we led a team of 7 up to campaign in the Stoke on Trent by-election, where we door knocked throughout the day to help Gareth Snell get elected. We continued our efforts when the snap general election was called and GMB Young London made sure we made our voices heard and rallied all members to help us campaign for Labour once again.

It has been a very active few months for GMB Young London, and with plans to go on further undercover missions as well as hold a rally near Westminster, this Summer – leading on to the Winter, is bound to be a successful one for us.



**NEXT ISSUE: Your Winter issue is out from early December.**

**Your chance to get your voice heard!**

We'd love to hear from you, whether you are a member, a rep or involved in equalities work in your local community.

Please send in your articles, news, photos, feedback or any events that you want to share with GMB London Region members. Drop us a line at: [neflgbt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:neflgbt@hotmail.co.uk)

**Deadline for items is 24 November 2017.** The maximum word count for articles is 400 words.

**JOIN ONLINE**  
[www.gmb.org.uk/join](http://www.gmb.org.uk/join)

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0300 333 0303  
[www.unionline.co.uk](http://www.unionline.co.uk)

## GMB at TUC Disabled Workers' Conference 2017

*Stephen Jones, Organiser, GMB Ability*

This was the first time that I was nominated to attend this annual event by my local Branch as well as by the Disability Strand Ability Group. Milton O' Garro, a self-defined disabled committee member from the Ability Group, attended as a visitor. We spent 2 full days at conference at TUC.

Firstly, some statistics: 195 delegates attended, plus 9 observers and some visitors. Delegates represented 22 different trade unions. GMB sent 10 delegates. The GMB delegation included Carl Lewthwaite, GMB's representative on the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee.

### **Mental health – most popular issue**

There were 19 motions plus 2 emergency motions. Five motions covered mental health issues and the many problems which people affected by these disabilities encounter. These were composited into one big motion which was passed, along with many others.

### **Disabled people and Brexit**

Carl Lewthwaite moved the first motion 'Disabled people, Brexit and the age of bigotry' for GMB which was passed. This called for conference to call on the TUC to campaign:

1. to minimise the impact of Brexit on disabled people;
2. for freedom of movement for personal assistants and carers from EU countries to work in the UK;
3. for investment in skills and training for PAs and carers.



The motion headed 'Separating disability-related absence from sickness absence protects disabled workers' was of particular interest and concern to me, and so I spoke in this debate. This concerned persistent problems relating to absence management procedures in respect of people with disabilities which is an issue of great concern to the GMB and myself. I believe sickness absence related to a person's disability should be recorded and dealt with separately from ordinary sickness absence and ideally discounted. My comments went down well and Carl told me that my contribution went out on social media.

### **Accessibility issues**

At the end of the conference, there was a vote on which motion should go forward to the TUC National Congress in September. Regrettably, the above motion 'Separating disability-related absence from sickness absence' came second behind one of the two emergency motions concerning 'Accessibility of [TUC Congress house] venue for the Disabled Worker's Conference'.

In conclusion, I was grateful for the opportunity to participate in this event and hope to be able to do so again in future. It was an eye-opener to the multitude of problems faced by disabled workers, in particular the many inadequate facilities in buildings and hotels.



### Dates for your Diary: August 2017 – February 2018

Join our self-organised equality groups on social media for events, latest news, campaigns, views, etc.: see page 12 for contact details.

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
<b>AUGUST</b>		
23	Norfolk and Suffolk Sisters	See page 5 in this newsletter
23	GMB Race London meeting	See page 12 for GMB Race contact details
26	High Wycombe Pride – first ever!	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/events/420284928328175/">www.facebook.com/events/420284928328175/</a>
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>		
19	GMB Sisters – open meeting	All women members welcome
<b>OCTOBER</b>		
	Black History Month	<a href="http://blackhistorymonth.org.uk/">blackhistorymonth.org.uk/</a>
4	GMB Race – BHM event	See page 12 for contact details
5	GMB Shout LGBT+ meeting	6.30-8 p.m., GMB Euston
10	World Mental Health Day	<a href="http://mentalhealth.org.uk/">mentalhealth.org.uk/</a>
14 - 22	National Hate Crime Awareness Week	#NHCAW
23	GMB Ability AGM	
31	Campaign day for Menstruation to Menopause	See page 12 for Sisters' contact details
<b>NOVEMBER</b>		
4	GMB Regional Equality Conference	Email Sue: <a href="mailto:equality@gmb.org.uk">equality@gmb.org.uk</a>
22 Nov. – 22 Dec.	Disability History Month	See page 12 for Ability's contact details
25	International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women	<a href="http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/">www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/</a>
28	GMB Sisters AGM	See page 12 for Sisters' contact details
<b>DECEMBER</b>		
1	GMB Shout AGM	Contact Shout for info – see page 12
1	World AIDS Day	<a href="http://www.worldaidsday.org/">www.worldaidsday.org/</a>
3	International Day for Disabled People	
10	International Human Rights Day	
<b>JANUARY</b>		
27	Holocaust Memorial Day	Activity packs available: <a href="http://hmd.org.uk/content/order-or-download-activity-pack">http://hmd.org.uk/content/order-or-download-activity-pack</a>
<b>FEBRUARY</b>		
	LGBT+ History Month	Contact Shout for info – see page 12

