



<b>EVENT:</b>	Parliamentary event - to meet with cross party MP's to discuss racism
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Boothroyd Room in Portcullis House, House of Westminster, London
<b>DATE:</b>	Tuesday 21st February, 1pm
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	Bill Acharjee - University of Brighton UNISON Branch & Member of the S Black Members Committee



Figure 1: House of Westminster, Portcullis House, London

2023 saw the launch of UNISON’s ‘Year of Black Workers’ campaign with Maragaret Greer, UNISON National Officer for Race Equality, putting out a call for ten Black Members Officers to attend a parliamentary round table discussions at the House of Westminster hosted by Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour MP for Streatham) and with several other MP’s in attendance from the party, who all sympathise and want to progress UNISON’s campaign around the Ethnicity Pay Gap (EPG), Cost-of-Living, Windrush Generation, UN immigration and the hostile environment to ensure UNISON’s Black member objectives are being taken forward for consideration, as such, I jumped at the opportunity to get invovled.



Figure 2: Anneliese Dodds (MP for Oxford East), Gloria Mills (UNISON Equalities National Secretary), Bell Riberio-Addy (Chair and MP for Streatham), David Lammy (MP for Tottenham), Anum Qaisar (MP for Airdrie and Shotts), and Florence Eshalomi (MP for Vauxhall)



The session started with The Chair, Bell Ribeiro-Addy setting the scene and welcoming guests, and explaining the importance of making EPG reporting mandatory and highlighted the work of the campaign to date:

- UNISON campaign around the issue of the ethnicity pay gap started in September 2021, centring on making EPG reporting mandatory, in partnership with Dianne Greyson's Ethnicity Pay Gap UK Campaign<sup>1</sup>.
- In February 2022, the Women and Equalities Committee published a new report<sup>2</sup> clearly stating that the EPG should be mandatory and urging the government to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting by April 2023 for all organisations that currently report for gender. However, In May 2022, the Government published a response to the Women and Equality Committee's report stating that they would not bring ethnicity pay gap reporting into legislation, due to the difficulties they could foresee with collecting the data.
- Government guidance for employers on EPG reporting, which was due to be published in summer 2022, will now come out some point in 2023.

The next speaker to address the UNISON Black members was Gloria Mills, UNISON Equalities National Secretary, who explained that UNISON has been calling to make EPG Reporting mandatory since September 2020, and, in partnership with Dianne Greyson's Ethnicity Pay Gap UK Campaign, and believes more needs to be achieved to support the campaign, and highlighted that the EPG is a symptom of systemic racism and discrimination within the labour market, with the Resolution Foundation finding that the ethnicity pay gap cost 1.9 million black workers £3.2 billion in lost wages in 2018 and explained how the pandemic disproportionately affected Black workers and communities.

The equalities secretary also stated that the EPG in the Greater London area is somewhere in the region of 17 – 25% between Black and white workers, and as 2023 is the Year of Black Workers to highlight the need for mandatory EPG reporting and calls for practical steps for change to progress this campaign further and address the pay gap, its causes and its effects should be supported by all public sector workers.

Anneliese Dodds, Labour MP for Oxford East, interjected and explained that EPG reporting should be easy for any organisation to administer because it will follow the same process as the gender pay gap reporting procedures, and explained that the Labour party and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, pledged to lead by example and have been publishing the EPG since. The MP also shared her thoughts about how being transparent about workforce diversity data is beneficial to employers because analysing the diversity of workforces and other equality-related data can help employers to identify any biases, barriers or discrimination (direct or indirect) that might give rise to patterns of inequality.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ethnicitypaygapcampaign.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8779/documents/88923/default/>



The Chair opened the floor for the UNISON activists to ask questions:

**1. Audrey Dinnall, UNISON East Midlands:**

*“How can MPs support with the reestablishment of nationwide race equality councils like we had in the 80s? Having these in place would give UNISON and race equality councils increased effectiveness in monitoring all employers in relation to ethnicity pay discrimination and the impact the cost of the living crisis is particularly having on our members.”*

David Lammy, Labour MP for Tottenham, responded by stating that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) took over the responsibilities of the ‘Commission for Racial Equality’, the ‘Equal Opportunities Commission’ and the ‘Disability Rights Commission’ in 2007 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights throughout Great Britain. However, due to the changes of government from Labour to the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition EHRC lost significant funding, therefore, unable to deliver on its objectives. The MP also announced that once Labour are back in government they will aim to rebuild the EHRC to become an entity that will be able to enforce equality matters as well as issue penalty fines to repeat offenders.

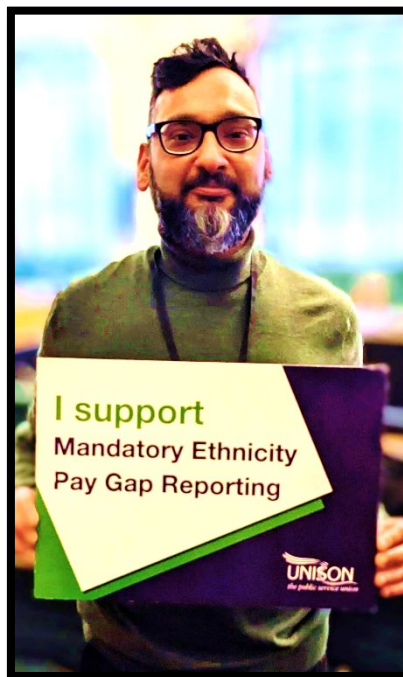


Figure 3: Bill Acharjee (Black Members Officer at University of Brighton)

**Bill Acharjee, University of Brighton UNISON:**

*“The recent TUC report highlighted the enormous structural and institutional discrimination Black workers face within their workplace (predominantly from line managers and co-workers) with 4 in 5 not reporting it because of the potential negative impact it will have on their work life. What interventions could MPs and others make to press the Government on*



*the EPG in consideration of the McGregor-Smith review<sup>3</sup>?”*

Anum Qaisar, Scottish National Party (SNP) MP for Airdrie and Shotts, responded to explain that within her constituency in Scotland many diverse communities are not fully aware of the full remit of trade unions who they are or what they do, and is aware of how many Pakistani people in Scotland do not vote or trust politicians, therefore, suggested more work and campaigns need to inform communities of the advantages of joining unions and what they do. The SNP MP also suggested that by developing and using case studies would be a good approach to encourage members to report unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

**Manjula Kumari, UNISON West Midlands:**

*“What work are you doing to address the ethnicity pay gap that we can take away and share with our members?”*

David Lammy responded by stating that Labour have a 100 day plan to implement when they form the new government after the next general election, and Anneliese Dodds, responded by stating that all members should contact their local MP’s and organisations to encourage them to support the EPG, and if any public sector employers already have EPG reporting then to ensure the documents are published periodically.

The Chair thanked all the guests and reiterated the next steps for the campaign including:

- Urging the Government to publish their delayed guidance for employers on ethnicity pay gap reporting.
- Urging a cross-party group of MPs to publicly declare their support for UNISON’s ask of mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting.
- Urging MPs to table questions and debates, to demonstrate their support for the campaign.
- UNISON members contacting their local MPs asking them to support the campaign.



Figure 4: UNISON SE Black Members Officers with Labour MPs

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