

about the conference

The Single Equalities Bill had its first reading in the House of Commons in April. It follows decades of legislation on sex, race and disability legislation and the introduction of significant changes to legislation in the last 12 years including upgraded maternity and paternity leave, regulations on sexual orientation, age and religion and belief and the introduction of gender, disability and race equality duties.

Despite existing laws, women are still paid less than men, with part-time women earning less than 65% of the hourly rate of full-time men. 30,000 women lose their jobs every year because they are pregnant; disabled workers are twice as likely to be unemployed as others; youth unemployment has jumped to a 16-year high of 726,000; and a 'sticky floor' exists for ethnic minorities in terms of advancement in the workplace. LGBT workers continue to face harassment, particularly in education. Workers who are multiply disadvantaged by their sex, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation and/or age are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and the legal remedies available in respect of such multiple discrimination are woefully inadequate.

It is appropriate, then, that trade unionists consider the many significant features of the new Bill including, in particular:

- The Single Equality Duty which will require public bodies to examine the requirements of their workforce and reduce inequality

And

- the positive action provision which would allow (but not require) employers to take some steps to redress existing disadvantage.

However, there is disappointment that that the Equality Bill does not go further in taking steps to tackle the gender pay gap, particularly in the private sector where it stands at over 20 per cent. The Bill also denies protection against homophobic harassment by school authorities, by the owners and managers of properties and by the providers of services.

This conference will follow the format of the very successful Women at Work conference last December. It will provide a timely opportunity for an in-depth critique of the Bill. It will bring together some of the finest academics, trade unionists and legal practitioners, offering delegates an informed and sympathetic understanding of the latest developments in the Equalities Bill.

programme

10:00 Registration and coffee

10.15 Welcome from Chair

Keynote Speech: Topic: The Single Equalities Bill

10:30 *Maria Eagle MP*
+ 5 mins Q&A

Topic: The New Equalities Bill: Green light for positive action on equalities?

11.00 Critical overview I – *Prof Aileen McColgan*

11:30 Tea and coffee

Topic: Using the Equalities Bill to end the Gender Pay Gap

11:40 Critical overview II – *Victoria Phillips, Thompsons Solicitors*

12:10 The Gender Pay Gap and Trade Union Campaigning
Diana Holland, Unite and Liane Venner, Unison

12:50 LUNCH (Not Provided)

Topic: The New Equalities Bill: The Public Duty Requirement and UK unions

1:50 Critical overview III – *Sarah Veale, TUC*

2:20 The view from the public sector- *Pat Campbell*

2:50 Tea and coffee

Topic: The New Equalities Bill: Institutionalising Hierarchies?

2:55 Critical Overview IV- *Prof Mary Davis*

3.20 Concluding speaker TBC

3.45 Discussion

4.00 Close