

**GMB**

**U N I O N**

**CEC SPECIAL REPORT  
GMB TASKFORCE FOR  
POSITIVE CHANGE  
PROGRESS REPORT TO  
CONGRESS 2022**

**MAKE  
WORK  
BETTER**

## GMB Taskforce for Positive Change Membership

Barbara Plant – GMB National President

### **CEC Members**

Gwylan Brinkworth	W&SW (CEC)
Elaine Daley	B&WM CEC)
Ann Dean	SCO (CEC)
Margaret Gregg	NWI (CEC)
Colin Gunter	M&EC (CEC)
Fiona Heneghan	SO (CEC)
Rachael Hookway	LO (CEC)
Mary Hutchinson	NO (CEC)
Farzana Jumma	YO (CEC)
Carol Robertson	M&EC (CEC)
Robbie Scott	LO(CEC)

### **Staff**

Ruth Brady – Regional Secretary, Wales and South West Region

Victoria Austin – Unite/NNC rep, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

Michelle Gordon – Regional Equality Officer, Southern Region

Jo Hepworth – Project Management, Northern Region

Tyehimba Nosakhere – Regional Equality Officer, Midlands and East Coast Region

Krissy O'Hagan – Unite/NNC rep, London Region

Jenny Preston – providing administrative support, Northern Region

Dr Helen Mott, Independent External Facilitator

We would like to acknowledge the work of the following members who stood down from the Taskforce during 2021/22 and thank them for their contributions: Nell Andrew, Emma Golding, Helen Purcell, Lib Whitfield, Nichole McIntosh, and Bally Sahonta

## Foreword

The suffragette slogan of Deeds not Words is just as important now as it was then.

Our members and staff will only believe that we are challenging sexual harassment and changing our culture if actions match the commitments given by the CEC and SMT, following the publication of the Monaghan Report. The Taskforce for Positive Change is making sure that this is happening.

The culture being created is one where reports of sexual harassment are always taken seriously and are always dealt with according to policy. That is why I am proud that, for the first time, we will have stand-alone sexual harassment policies for members and staff. This will enable consistency in how we deal with such reports, which in turn will build up the trust for members or staff to feel confident to report such incidents.

This is a continuous cycle, as outlined in the diagram below. We are also, at last, making sure that the recommendations from the Dr. Elizabeth Henry report are put into practice.



*From the Fawcett Society's report on Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, November 2021. Reproduced with permission.*

I want to put on record my thanks to all the members of the Taskforce for Positive Change, who have given freely of their time to make sure these changes happen

and become embedded. We are extremely privileged to have Dr. Helen Mott, as our external facilitator, whose expertise in this field of sexual harassment and culture change is second to none.

Congress 2021 resolved that further reports would be given to future Congresses on the work of the Taskforce.

In line with the Rulebook and longstanding practice, Congress does not debate or determine GMB staff terms and conditions, which are a matter for consultation with the staff unions. It is appropriate to set out factual information, here, where these matters relate to progress on the recommendations of the Monaghan and Henry reports.

We celebrate improvements in gender diversity at different levels of our organisation, including through the appointment of three women Regional Secretaries for the first time in our history.

Transformational change is never quick or easy and there is still much to do, but we are on the right path - as this report outlines.

We can't just tick off the recommendations one by one. Behind each one of the 27 Monaghan and 9 Henry recommendations are values that include dignity, respect, inclusivity, and equality.

We have to continuously live those values.

**Barbara Plant**  
**GMB National President**

## Report

In August 2020 Karon Monaghan QC submitted her report to the Central Executive Council (CEC), finding that there was a culture of “institutional sexism” in the GMB.

She described significant job segregation and underrepresentation of women throughout the ranks, and endemic bullying, misogyny, cronyism and sexual harassment.

As a part of its commitment to transparency, the GMB [published the Monaghan Report](#) and has a dedicated [page](#) on its website where members and others can access information about actions taken and progress made in the light of the report.

In its initial response to the report, the CEC was unequivocal about the need for change, stating the GMB’s commitment to achieving transformational change, to create a safe and inclusive place for all so that women in the union and women in society more widely are supported in the struggle for equality, inclusion and social justice.

All of the 27 recommendations in the report were agreed in principle by the CEC, some of which require a number of actions.

The CEC also raised the [report by Dr Elizabeth Henry](#) who aimed to undertake ‘a comprehensive race equality audit of the GMB union’ in 2002 (the Henry Report). The recommendations of this report had not previously been fully acted upon. The CEC committed itself to examine and refresh the recommendations and findings of the Henry Report in order to implement them, alongside those of the Monaghan Report, as part of the work of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce for Positive Change was established in January 2021 to set out the steps that GMB needs to take to ensure that each of the recommendations from the Monaghan are fully implemented and from the Henry Report are reviewed and refreshed prior to implementation, to take account of changes in legislation since 2002. Full implementation means:

- 1) make sure this happens, and
- 2) make sure that the change is permanent and ongoing.

In 2021, Congress adopted the CEC [Special Report of the Taskforce for Positive Change](#). That report outlined the work already done by the Taskforce and future areas of work that would be prioritised.

The Taskforce is committed to fulfilling the objectives it has been set by the CEC with the support of the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the GMB: the Taskforce holds no power to make things happen in and of itself, and does not seek that kind of power.

Instead, it does the work of identifying what needs to change and how, and then asks those who do hold power (the CEC, and the SMT) to take the steps it identifies for making those changes.

The past year has seen a refreshed leadership structure and the start of a refreshed regional structure in GMB which together are reinvigorating the Union's ability to deliver for its members on the issues of justice and equality for all. The Taskforce is working with newly appointed national officers, e.g. in communications and HR, to ensure that the recommendations of Monaghan and Henry are central to how the Union works for its members, as well as how it works as an employer of excellence in its own right, looking after the staff who look after and serve our membership.

The election of GMB's General Secretary Gary Smith, in June 2021, has contributed to the positive changes that the Taskforce and all GMB members and staff have been keen to see. The General Secretary has actively engaged with the Taskforce to establish a virtuous circle of consultation, engagement, policy, and practice that is committed to visibly demonstrating anti-sexist and anti-racist values. He is also committed to challenging all of us to demonstrate those values every day. This is the kind of powerful leadership action that we know gets results, hand in hand with the improvements to systems and structures and processes that are also underway.

Central to the progress of many of the recommendations have been:

1. Equality data and monitoring, because it is essential to know the baselines that we are starting from to be able to identify areas for improvement, drive change and demonstrate and celebrate progress
2. Ensuring that GMB is doing everything in line with best practice and with legislation, including equality legislation.

A lot of work has been achieved in the past year. The Taskforce are grateful to all Regional Secretaries who have facilitated the work of the Taskforce – including through providing capacity.

The Race Taskforce, which is a subgroup of the Positive Change Taskforce and which is led by and for staff and activists with lived experience of racial injustice and organising for anti-racist practice, has made excellent progress this year. The group has focused its activities on developing anti-oppressive values, positive inclusive culture, and real opportunities for people from Black Asian and minority backgrounds to progress.

An action plan is being produced with the full and safe participation of every nation and Region at its heart and with key consultation points and questions identified as well as internal and external stakeholder groups. Early engagement has indicated the need to develop specific Safe Spaces for all those at GMB from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background who need to use them, and guidelines for this have been produced. Analysis of current data shows the need to improve directed communications with Black, Asian and minority ethnic members.

A plan is in place for identifying credible Race Awareness and Discrimination Training that will make a positive and lasting difference. An in-depth membership analysis has been produced which pinpoints the differences and similarities and gaps in knowledge about Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in the Union by membership as well as Reps and postholders in Equality and Race related roles. Race postholders with lived experience are too few, and do not have a sufficiently high profile as role models.

An intersectional analysis has offered insight into multiple intersections of identity. This has specifically identified the older age profile of Black, Asian and minority ethnic members as an issue of concern alongside the early exit of new members from minoritised backgrounds compared to white members. These insights lead directly into recommendations for the specific targeting of young Black, Asian and minority ethnic members and workers for engagement and empowerment, to provide them with a credible and powerful platform in the GMB. Key Henry Report recommendations on providing 'sufficient resources to lead and champion' the union's racial justice work are being met.

Sexual harassment has a deep and lasting impact in the lives of many women, and it is disproportionately targeted at the most vulnerable or marginalised in

society including those who have the fewest workplace rights, such as workers on zero hours contracts. This past year has seen continued focus on tackling sexual harassment from government, trade unions, feminist and equality-focused organisations alike.

Since our last report to Congress, the Government Equalities Office published the largest ever survey of sexual harassment in the UK. The Government has committed to introducing a duty requiring employers to prevent sexual harassment. It will introduce explicit legal protections from 'third-party' sexual harassment (that means harassment done by customers or clients) and it will work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to produce statutory guidance. It is also likely to increase the time limits for bringing cases to Tribunal.

ACAS published new, standalone [guidance](#) on sexual harassment. The Fawcett Society also published a detailed [report](#) with recommendations for best practice to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment and the TUC published its own [implementation framework](#) for preventing sexual harassment. Our taskforce members Barbara Plant, National President, and Helen Mott, independent facilitator, have been involved with these initiatives and have ensured that the work GMB is doing on sexual harassment meets the highest thresholds for best practice and is 'future-proofed' for the new legal requirements.

The main focus of the work on sexual harassment this year has been the development, consultation, legal sign-off and completion of our two landmark sexual harassment policies: for all GMB staff, and for all GMB members. These standalone policies meet the highest standards for protecting our staff and our members, and we are proud that they will be in place this year.

The members' policy met with unanimous approval at the first 'in-person' meeting of the CEC earlier this year, and we are all keen to see it implemented which will happen following the adoption at Congress of the rule changes that will allow the new procedures to be used. The Taskforce has worked hard on consultation so that all those associated with GMB will be assured of the very best policy and procedures for preventing and responding to sexual harassment, which takes into account all the new guidance as well as case law. The policies are on course to be fully implemented later this year.

Other work has also been ongoing with SMT to look at the Rulebook to make sure it will keep up to date with equality law and best practice. A Safeguarding Policy and Relationships Policy will be priority areas of work for the year ahead. Short

guidance documents for using the policies, with flowcharts, have also been developed and work is underway with the comms team to make sure that all those covered by the policies are able to understand and use them.

Guidance on best practice emphasises the importance of leadership and it also emphasises the importance of asking what people feel and need, in their own particular circumstances. In the last year we have designed, sent out and analysed a simple '3 questions' survey and from this we learned that trust and consistency were key issues. We shared these findings with the CEC and SMT and know that they are working on increasing trust and consistency and culture change, for example through the exciting leadership development training being led by RealClear and through the guidelines that the Taskforce developed for Regional Positive Change Forums, so that Regions can build excellence in preventing sexual harassment and promoting race equality. Three Regions are currently piloting these structures and will let us know how they are working.

Work is ongoing on data, staff matters, and training to progress the recommendations of the Monaghan and Henry reports that relate to those areas, some of which are matters for internal consultation. We have been very pleased by the enthusiastic adoption of the new, updated [Zero Tolerance Statement](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). Delegates will have seen these in their delegate packs and we are working with Comms and HR to make sure that everyone in GMB is aware of, and supports, the messages in these key documents. Together we will work to make sure that our events and meetings are safe and enjoyable for every one of our members.

Leadership training on sexual harassment has been completed by all SMT members in the past year, and CEC Appeals Committee members have also received training on understanding bias and being guided by GMB values in complaint processes (both sets of training have been delivered Dr. Helen Mott).

## **Conclusion**

The GMB is a campaigning and organising union and, through following GMB@Work, members collectively make their work better.

We now have a Women's Campaign Unit. This will form a core part of the union's industrial work over the coming years. And as this year's report on the Women's Campaign Unit sets out, gender equality in the workplace is about more than securing equal pay for equal work, or making sure that the work women occupy in

the majority is no longer under-valued. It is also about making sure that workplaces are safe for all, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

This must apply within our own union, and the Taskforce for Positive Change is working hard to make sure that this transformational change is embedded in our union's policies and procedures. We are creating a culture that prevents discrimination and harassment from happening. To this end, the Race Task Group continues its work on implementing the Henry report recommendations, and this will be helped enormously through the introduction of extra capacity.

We can be proud that we have led the way for others. The TUC has also now produced their own set of policies and guidance for reps on tackling sexual harassment in the workplace, based largely on the work of Dr. Helen Mott and the GMB.

Union power is based on solidarity, in which all members are equal and respected. There should be no behaviour that puts up barriers or creates conflict that breaks that solidarity.

Unity is strength, and where we have collective strength, we can challenge employers to make work better.