

Achieving Equal Pay in the Workplace

Your Guide to Changing Policy and Practice

From Policy to Practice: Building a Workplace Culture which Supports Equality

You and your colleagues have campaigned hard and won essential improvements in workplace policies and procedures when it comes to delivering equal pay for staff. Job done? No.

With key exceptions, most workplace policies are not contractual. An employer failing to act in accordance with a workplace policy is not a breach of contract. It is not in and of itself illegal. Workers must hold them to account.

When discrimination occurs due to a failure to act according to policy, this is still classed as discrimination. However, proof requires meeting stringent legal tests. And we don't want to be in a workplace where threats of legal action are a constant. It's exhausting.

Therefore, you and your colleagues must seek to ensure additional steps are implemented alongside the written improvements to policies and procedure.

The employer should be encouraged to:

- Be transparent – by publicising any additions and changes to policies and giving a positive rationale for the changes;
- Develop mandatory training for all line managers on the word and spirit of the changes to policies and procedures. If the employer delivers routine Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training, any changes to policies and procedures can be covered in this training; and
- Review the impact of the changes in policies and procedures after a reasonable period of time. Compare equality outcomes at the end of the review period with outcomes before the changes were made.

You, your colleagues and other trade union members should:

- Educate your union members and non- unionised workers on the improvements you've secured as a union collective. Some members/workers will have less awareness of workplace policies than others;
- Reach out to new union members, particularly those who are new colleagues or who identify as belonging to an underrepresented group;
- Promote your wins: Use the newly won policy and procedure improvements as a recruitment tool for non-union members;
- Remain attentive to the implementation and application of the improvements you've secured:
 - Engage with your fellow union members through meetings;

Achieving Equal Pay in the Workplace

Your Guide to Changing Policy and Practice

- You can also track member concerns and queries through conversations and surveys. Are you hearing reports of “nothing’s changed” or “they didn’t follow the new policy when I asked about x”?
- Has your employer dedicated enough resources to ensure policy improvements can be carried out in a meaningful way?
- Be prepared to return to the bargaining table. Having secured improvements in the first place, the employer implicitly accepts the benefit of those improvements. You have a shared interest in ensuring the improvements are properly implemented. This can be done through changes in decision making, improvements in behaviours and a positive shift in workplace culture so that equal pay is an expectation, not just an aspiration.