Achieving Equal Pay in the Workplace

Your Guide to Changing Policy and Practice

During the Negotiations

During the negotiations representatives need to:

Ensure that you don't go into the negotiation meetings on your own

Even if you are the only representative in the workplace, find others to accompany you. They don't have to be formal reps, but they can take responsibility for different roles within the meetings, present different bits of information or provide member updates on progress. Seek volunteers at your branch meetings.

Take notes

Make sure that you write down what your employer is saying in the negotiation so that you can refer back to it later. You don't need to write down everything word for word, but it helps to have a record of what has been discussed and agreed so that you can come back to it later if something unexpected happens, or just to update your union members on progress.

Agree the bottom line

Agree as a branch (or group), what your bottom line is and what you are prepared to do to achieve it.

Forewarn your colleagues about the things your employer might do to undermine you and/or the collective group

Tell them what kind of questions they might be asked, or what incentives they might be promised if they agree not to pursue the claim for equal pay. Think of this as an inoculation. This will strengthen the group and build trust in your ability to negotiate for the group.

Make sure workers know that the Equality Act 2010 states that an employer cannot prevent employees sharing and discussing rates of pay in relation to protected characteristics

You cannot be disciplined for talking about Equal Pay. If you are a trade union representative you have additional protection under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act.

Meet in advance

Meet in advance of negotiations with the other members who are going into the meeting with you to plan who will say what, and how you will approach specific issues. After the negotiations, come back to discuss and review progress and consider what you need to do next.

Have some facts and figures ready for discussion that will show the employer that you are well informed and serious about this issue

You can find out how much money your employer made in each financial year by looking at Companies House *(www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house)* website. Talk to your union about paying to access more detailed information if needed. You can use this to challenge the employer if they say the organisation can't afford to address the issue. It is also useful to know that the cost of an employment tribunal in England and Wales is free for claimants to lodge a claim (those making a claim against an employer).

Continue dialogue with members. Keep everyone updated on negotiations as much as possible, so that if you reach an impasse, they can be mobilised to put pressure on the employer.

Ensure that the branch or group is prepared to demonstrate the strength of feeling on this issue

There are many ways to show the employer that you are serious without breaking any rules. There is strength in numbers. One staff member wearing a T-shirt/badge/sticker staying 'Equal Pay' draws a little attention, but everyone doing it forces the employer to notice and can be very powerful.

Contact the relevant equality and support structures in your union (eg full time or elected officials)

They will be able to provide advice and support for your discussions.

Agree a timeline for talks and a subsequent timeline for the actions that follow

Don't allow the employer to drag their feet on taking action and make sure staff know when they can expect to hear about progress, so if there isn't any you can mobilise them to put pressure on the employer.

Send agreed statements of progress with the employer out to staff

This means that you can demonstrate the progress of discussions and ensure the employer is publicly committing to action.

Detail the final agreement in writing

Take it back to members before signing up to anything. Members should feel they own and have a part to play in the process, they need to agree to any final deal and ensure it meets their expectations.

Celebrate your successes!

If you get a deal, make sure your union group finds time to enjoy that, and use any event you organise as a springboard for the next campaign you hope to work on.