

# Achieving Equal Pay in the Workplace

Your Guide to Changing Policy and Practice

## What is a Trade Union and why should I join one?

**A trade union is a group of workers who come together to improve or maintain their pay and/ or conditions of employment.**

Established unions have democratic structures and can provide support to workers in a particular workplace as well as campaigning on local or national issues to effect positive change. If there are already members of a union in your workplace,

find out which union they are a member of and join it. Only by working together can workers win improvements in the workplace. Also find out if a particular union is 'recognised' in your workplace as this may mean that an agreement between the union and the employer is already in place to facilitate collective bargaining.

Trade unions give agency to working people and help to redress the imbalance of power between employers and employees or workers. Acting collaboratively with other workers is the best way to effect change. If there is more than one union in your workplace, try to find out if specific groups of workers are members of a specific union. For example, in a hospital, doctors and nurses will often be members of a medical workers union, while administrative staff may be members of a clerical workers union.

If there are no union members in your workplace, or you still don't know which union to join, you can find out more about the right union for you via the [TUC Join a Union \(www.tuc.org.uk/join-a-union\)](http://www.tuc.org.uk/join-a-union) website.

It is your legal right to join a union, and an employer cannot discriminate against you for being a member of a trade union.

### Union Stories: FDA

The FDA - the union for managers and professionals in public service - has supported equal pay for more than 80 years, first sending representatives to the Civil Service Equal Pay Committee in 1924.

In 1935 FDA's AGM passed a resolution committing the union to "equal salary scales for men and women Civil Servants employed in the same grades".

# Achieving Equal Pay in the Workplace

Your Guide to Changing Policy and Practice

Having phased out different pay scales in the civil service by 1961, much of the battle for equal pay involves claims of indirect discrimination. For example, FDA has argued since 2014 that HMRC's pay system indirectly discriminates against women, owing to the fact that length of service is used as a determinant of basic pay. Men employed by HMRC typically have longer service than women and are clustered disproportionately at or near the top of the pay ranges for the relevant grades.

In recent years the gender pay gap in the civil service has been narrowing (9.3% in 2020 to 8.8% in 2021) but the greatest pay gap is in the most senior positions. The average Senior Civil Service pay for men sits £2,250 above that for women.

The complexity of pay grades, pay minima and maxima, and the impact of delegated pay (each department negotiates separately on non-SCS pay) in the modern civil service means the fight for equal pay continues for FDA members. Where the union identifies pay inequality and can campaign, make legal claims, and fight for justice, it continues to do so.

[Read more on the FDA website \(www.fda.org.uk/home/Newsandmedia/Features/victoria-jones-equal-pay-unions.aspx\)](http://www.fda.org.uk/home/Newsandmedia/Features/victoria-jones-equal-pay-unions.aspx)

## Union Stories: Pharmacists' Defence Association Union (2022)

The Pharmacists' Defence Association Union (PDAU) achieved its first recognition agreement in 2019 following protracted negotiations with Boots. Boots is the biggest employer of pharmacists working in community pharmacy, so it was a major achievement for the union to be able to negotiate the terms and conditions of its members employed by the company.

From the outset the PDAU has had two objectives in relation to pay. One is to ensure members' income maintains its purchasing power and the other is to ensure the pay system within the company is transparent, objective and complies with the Equality Act.

It has set up an Equality Committee with the company, which looks at wider equality issues, but supplemented this with a working group specifically looking at the pay system and whether it meets the test of being transparent, in the sense that any employee can know where they are within the pay system and whether this is determined by objective factors such as experience, qualifications, and expertise.

# Achieving Equal Pay in the Workplace

Your Guide to Changing Policy and Practice

Although there is a long way to go, trade union recognition has enabled these issues to be placed on the agenda and to be jointly progressed by the company and the union. Unfortunately, there are still areas where line manager discretion has a significant impact on an individual's pay and PDAU's work to inject a much greater degree of objectivity into this process continues, but the establishment of the working party and equalities subcommittee represented a key step towards achieving its aims.