

UNISON Devon County Branch.

**AGM Report: Lesbian and Gay Officer**

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005

(For reasons of confidentiality this report does not go into detail in some places.)

The Devon LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Group had a less locally active but more widely influential year.

**Recruiting**

The Group continues to grow.

**Organising**

- Liaison with Devon County Council became more difficult with the transfer of the link officer's role to the Personnel & Performance Directorate. The Directorate has yet to appoint someone to that role. It is hoped that meaningful progress can resume when an appointment is made. Working with the Officer who acts as the link to the Council's staff LGBT Group has not been without difficulty.
- Creation of the Branch Equality Forum. The Group feels this is a significant step forward for the Branch and adds to the power of our voice. We are grateful to the Branch Equality Officer for the work he has done to bring this about.
- In line with the expressed wish of Unison in regard to Self-organised Groups our Group members have continued to move into areas of responsibility within our Branch.
- Working with other LGBT Groups in the SW Region. We have met with the Somerset County LGBT Group and have been involved in encouraging UNISON members in Bristol to begin a group there.

**Campaigning**

With the Workplace Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations December 2003 successfully in place our energy turned to the campaign for Civil Partnership rights. In particular, we lobbied for the Civil Partnership Bill to include retrospective in regard to the surviving 'spouses' pensions benefit. The lobbying included both MPs and members of the House of Lords. News of the success of the lobbying and of the Bill's approval came through when two of the Group's members were attending the Annual National L&G Conference in Cardiff. It was a powerfully emotional moment for all, when at last our families could escape from Section 28's hateful, lingering label of being 'pretend families'.

Our Group contributed to the successful language guide 'Equality in Action – Diversity in Diction' produced in this Branch. We are delighted to see it published by the TUC for use by trade unionists around the Country. It will help us when we try to explain the ways in which we are inadvertently left out of the workplace 'environment'.

**Membership of outside bodies**

Members of the Group are active with outside bodies.

**Moira Macdonald**, Lesbian and Gay Officer