

26 April 2024

Fighting for equality in PCS

Julia McMurray and Nicola Ridler, your Group Women's Advisory Committee chairs, look back on the invaluable work being carried out for members.

Since October the **group women's advisory committee (GWAC)** in HMRC has been looking at some different areas which haven't really been looked at for a few years. **Nikki Ridler**, my co-chair, is equally passionate about the health and safety of women so this is the area that we have been focussing most on. Nikki has been looking at legislation that is coming in to protect women from domestic violence and abuse. I have been looking at women's health and the stigma around menstruation and menopause.

One of the areas we are very passionate about is ensuring that all of the branch women's officers are aware of what the GWAC is, what we do and how to contact us. To that end, me and Nikki decided that a meeting of all of the branch women's officers would achieve all of that.

The meeting was held on 20 December 2023 and had representatives from every HMRC branch in the UK. During the meeting we advised branches on how to set up branch women's advisory committees, introduce the GWAC, how we can help women's officers and get an idea of what issues were affecting their female members and how the GWAC can help. The meeting also gave the women's officers a chance to discuss issues with people outside of their branch.

Lorna Merry, the group president, was present and talked about what the GEC do and what they can do with the main issues being raised. The meeting was so successful that we are in the middle of preparing for another one being held in late April.

One area that was flagged up in the December meeting is the lack of training for all equality officers, the lack of practical support in getting a BWAC set up and knowing how to raise issues specific to women up through the chain. This is something that the GWAC has started looking into and we are hoping to have some help available soon.

During a discussion between Nikki and myself, we realised that we had forgotten about the separate legal systems in each of the constituent areas of the UK so we are currently creating a database of what laws are applicable in each area of the UK as well as having links to useful websites and guidance on it. The database will, hopefully, ensure that reps in all areas can ensure that they're following the correct legislation for their region.

Julia McMurray (Glasgow Branch) and **Nikki Ridler** (Bristol & Reading branch) – co-chairs of GWAC