

Campaigning for Wages Not Based on Ages



An update from GMB Young Members Chair Ruth Pitchford on the campaign so far

In 2016 the Government launched their so-called National 'Living Wage', which only applies to workers aged 25 and over, meaning that companies can currently pay workers aged under 25 up to 46% less for doing the same job as older colleagues. It's nothing more than a rebranded minimum wage, discriminating on the basis of age.

500,000 young people suffer from this wage discrimination, so it was no surprise when many of our young members affected came forward to tell us how angry they were. Young workers are already more likely to be trapped in low-paid work with little guaranteed hours, while we struggle with the same rising rent and bills as our older colleagues.



This discriminatory pay policy only makes this worse – we’ve heard cases of young parents who are being paid so little they can’t afford childcare costs or a home of their own. Our bills are not 46% lower so why are our wages?

We knew we needed to take action, so the GMB Young Members Network launched our Wages Not Based On Ages campaign.



Our activists have been in the workplace organising around young workers’ unequal pay for a while, but we knew that this wage discrimination was also a political issue – a Tory trick denying young people a fair deal at work, so we also needed to fight politically to change it.

Earlier this year a Private Members’ Bill was submitted to be debated in Parliament on July 6th calling for the National Living Wage rate to be extended to young workers under 25. Through our social media pages and regional activist groups we have called on MPs to attend the debate and vote in favour of the bill. These involved firstly creating motions for Labour Party members to pass at their CLPs calling on their Labour MP to vote in favour of the bill.

“ We haven’t stopped campaigning, and will be continuing to mobilise our movement and build public support, this Tory Government won’t attack young workers and get away with it.

We have also carried out a national day of action in cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, London and Newcastle where activists gathered petition signatures from the public and gave out campaign



postcards. MPs' letterboxes in Parliament would have seen a flurry of these postcards coming in, signed by their constituents calling on them to support the bill.

Our campaign has been successful at raising awareness of this issue for young workers. Age discrimination in pay affects young people in workplaces across different industries, from retail and fast food to care homes and local businesses, and as a result our campaign has gathered support across the movement, including being promoted by the TUC Young Workers' Forum and Young Labour.

Much of this has been down to young workers affected by the age banding of pay sharing their stories, it has really brought the issue home to a lot of people and ensured MPs know the real effect this Government's policy is having on young workers in their constituencies.

Age discrimination in pay is so unfair that most people we spoke to in the street understood and agreed with us, it is important we keep spreading the message out as far as possible. Generating campaign material and tools that anyone can get involved in and encourage others to take action has been really important to achieving this, as well as ensuring co-ordinated action across our regional activist groups.

Frustratingly Tory MPs talked out the Private Members' Bill reading session in Parliament before the National Living Wage bill could be debated. However, the bill is due to be finally read in Parliament on the 23rd November.

We haven't stopped campaigning, and will be continuing to mobilise our movement and build public support, this Tory Government won't attack young workers and get away with it.

If you would like to get involved in our campaigning, email us at gmbyoungmembers@gmail.com.

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