



Award Winners

GMB Congress 2022



Eleanor Marx Award 2022

Award Winner: Gemma Pemberton-Williamson, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

Gemma Williamson is a GMB rep at Airedale Hospital. In 2021, Gemma worked alongside officers, other workplace reps and members to help secure a significant pay win for outsourced NHS workers employed by the hospital's wholly-owned subsidiary, AGH Solutions (AGHS).

During the dispute she stepped up to join the negotiation team as a fearless voice for the workers demanding pay justice. Gemma was straight-talking and unprepared to accept management's cries of poverty. In one meeting, she called out the crass attempts by management to endear themselves to workers and persuade workers the union couldn't win, declaring: "Members don't want your chocolate bars, they want a pay rise and they're prepared to take action to get it."

Throughout the campaign Gemma was on the ground listening and speaking to workers about the dispute, building confidence and momentum ahead of industrial action.

Gemma was fundamental to this campaign, inspiring new and long-standing members with her determination and refusal to accept anything less than what members were calling for, which was parity with their colleagues employed by the NHS.

Since our members' success in achieving victory at Airedale, Gemma has stepped up within K40 Branch, becoming K40's first female and black branch President.

She continues to be a brilliant advocate for members in disciplinary and grievance hearings, as well as in ongoing negotiations with AGHS as she pushes for even better terms and conditions. Gemma has also led important initiatives at the hospital with respect to equality issues.

As well as being a fantastic workplace rep, Gemma is a lovely woman respected by our members, and all that have the pleasure of working and campaigning alongside her. This is a fitting and very well-deserved award.

Award Winner: Jo Smith, Southern Region

In 2020 and 2021, Jo led the first ever Neurodiversity campaign in the country for the GMB – at her employer, the South East Coast Ambulance Service. Jo organised neurodivergent workers by reaching out to them and telling their stories on social media. The stories told of the huge day-to-day impact of the lack of adaptations for neurodivergent workers - our members really engaged with these stories. Jo organised infographics about each neurodivergent condition and ensured info was highlighted

in members; workplaces by coordinating several branch reps who were also neurodivergent. Jo oversaw an amazing rise in recruitment – of around 100 new members to the GMB and 2 new reps, both who identified as neurodivergent. On top of all this, Jo negotiated with the trust and chief executive a neurodiversity charter to ensure our members would be supported at every step of their employment with SECAMB.

Jo was an instrumental contributor to the reps working group for the national GMB Neurodiversity: Thinking Different at Work toolkit - and her campaign was used as best practice nationally as the first full GMB neurodiversity campaign.

Jo highlights that women are statistically less likely to be recognised and diagnosed with a neurodivergent condition, and blogged her entire experience of the challenges of being a undiagnosed neurodivergent worker.

Through the workplace charter, funding was obtained for staff like Jo to gain diagnosis as adult diagnosis of some conditions is not available on the NHS.

Jo has been the voice of the neurodivergent workers and fought in a really emotional campaign to make a difference to our everyday members - all during the COVID-19 crisis.

Award Winner: Annette Drylie, GMB Scotland

Annette is an inspirational woman to many within the movement and has been at the heart of what we have been doing in GMB Scotland for many years.

Annette leads on the Equality agenda in GMB Scotland and is the branch secretary of the Fife Public Services branch. Within Fife Council her organising has seen the introduction of Reasonable Adjustment Passports, Menopause Policy and Period Policy helping thousands of council workers.

She has been at the forefront of the continued fight for pay justice in Fife against discriminatory pay practices, initiating and engaging around a third wave of equal pay claims.

Annette's work on GMB Scotland's Equality Forum and through the STUC Women's Committee has seen her support and develop activists and events as well as making sure that the Equalities agenda is embedded in the industrial agenda.

Annette is a fighter, who wouldn't ever think of taking a step backwards when it comes to defending her members.

Mary MacArthur Health & Safety Rep of the Year Award 2022

Overall Award Winner: Ben Cook, Midlands and East Coast Region

For outstanding campaigning work in Asda Retail across the Region and beyond.

Ben performed over 400 covid spot inspections across our region, ensuring Asda followed the government guidance, had the correct PPE and implemented social distancing measures.

He worked extremely hard to address design faults on the new home shopping van, working with members in Grimsby and Scunthorpe to identify issue with both the door construction and the internal racking.

Both hazards have now been rectified and a retrofitting programme was implemented by the employer.

Ben has been a leading figure in the challenge to Asda on the design of Home Shopping trolleys, both within the Region and nationally.

Ben collated evidence to demonstrate that the trolleys discriminate against female members and through a collective grievance with members in Asda Boston he has put this firmly on the agenda with Senior Asda management.

Ben has been a member of the National Asda and Retail H&S committees for many years.

He raised domestic abuse nationally after representing members who were DV victims, and there is now a domestic abuse policy.

He has challenged Asda on disability and age discrimination by organising collectively, and helped to develop the company's mental health policy.

Ben has also forced a number of substantial improvements in stores in Regions by doing well over 300 safety inspections.

These resulted in stores having new roofs built, and a major overhaul of fire safety.

He recruited 4 new reps in this period, and has worked with Officers to train and develop these them.

Runner-up: Vanessa Roberts, Birmingham and West Midlands Region,

For challenging British Gas management to provide correctly fitting PPE and uniform for women.

A long-term campaign that Vanessa finally won this year.

She has ensured that her rep work extended to all equality strands, making sure someone's differences never results in them being less protected, less safe and less likely to come home in the same condition they left for work.

Whilst physical safety is critical in the gas industry, mental health is a major concern and Vanessa's activism has changed her companies attitude towards this subject.

This has replaced a managerial stick, with a supportive approach, changing many employees' lives for the better.

Special Recognition: Health & Safety Rep team at Serco Sandwell.

Whilst the Mary MacArthur Award recognises individual achievements, we received a collective nomination this year that the President and General Secretary felt was worthy of special recognition.

The rep team at Serco Sandwell – Sarah James, Angela Reynolds, Simon Gardner, Darren James, Christian Knott and Mark Shirley - lead the Oldbury waste and recycling site through six days of strike action over unsafe equipment, inadequate PPE, failures to assess risk, lack of hygiene facilities, and bullying from management when challenged.

117 members were recruited through the campaign, and 4 new reps elected on site.

This action has resulted in major improvements to standards on site, and is an impressive example of using health and safety issues to successfully organise the workplace.

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