

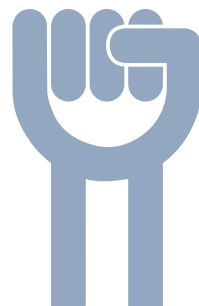


The Professional Trade Union for Prison
Correctional, Public and Private and Mental Health
Trust Services Providers and Immigration Services

POA Annual Conference 2026

Conference Papers 1 - 4

FIGHTING TOGETHER
WINNING TOGETHER



CONFERENCE PAPER 1

Conference Paper 1 - POA Race Discrimination Policy

1. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

The POA is absolutely committed to equal opportunities and opposes any display or act of discrimination or harassment and will challenge any discrimination on grounds of race to ensure that employees and union members are fully protected.

The POA recognises that racism whether direct, indirect, institutional, or structural undermines solidarity, representation, and trust, and will not be tolerated within the organisation.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All POA members.
- Elected officials and representatives.
- Employees, contractors, and volunteers acting on behalf of the POA.
- All POA activities, including meetings, training, communications, events, disciplinary processes, and representation of members.

3. DEFINITION OF RACE DISCRIMINATION

Race discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the grounds of;

- Colour
- Nationality
- Ethnic or national origins

Race discrimination may take the form of;

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment, including racist language or behaviour
- Victimisation, including retaliation against individuals who raised concerns or complaints.
- Institutional racism, where policies or practices disadvantage racial or ethnic groups.

4. COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

The POA will;

- Actively promote racial equality and inclusion in all its structures and activities.
- Ensure that policies, practices, and decision-making processes do not disadvantage members on racial grounds.
- Encourage participation and representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic members at all levels.
- Challenge racism within the POA.

5. THE POA EXECUTIVE AND OFFICERS

The NEC and all elected officers shall:

- Lead by example in upholding this policy.
- Take all complaints of race discrimination seriously and act promptly under Rule 26.
- Ensure fair, transparent, and lawful handling of complaints.
- Promote equality training and awareness.

6. COMPLAINTS AND ENFORCEMENT

- Any member who believes they have been subjected to race discrimination within the POA may raise a complaint under the POA's complaints or disciplinary procedures.
- Complaints will be handled confidentially, impartially and without unreasonable delay under Rule 26 (members) or Disciplinary Policy (employees) or both.
- Proven breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from office or membership or other sanctions in accordance with POA Rules or Disciplinary Policy.
- This policy shall be reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance with the TUC guidance and equality legislation.

CONFERENCE PAPER 2

Conference Paper 2 - POA – Employment Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is unacceptable, undermines the dignity of an individual, is morally wrong, unlawful and has a detrimental impact on individuals, in the workplace and within the wider organisation.

The POA is committed to promoting a workplace environment free from all forms of sexual harassment and recognises the responsibility that it has in protecting its employees and the membership.

The POA believes that appropriate steps must be taken to eradicate sexual harassment amongst its members and workers.

ACAS code of practice notes the following –

By law, all employers must take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees.

The law is the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.

The law came into effect on 26 October 2024.

The law covers sexual harassment from:

- other people at work
- third parties – for example customers and clients

Employers must take action to assess risks and put measures in place. They cannot wait until sexual harassment happens. If it's already happened, the employer must take action to stop it happening again.

All employees and POA members have a duty to challenge and report all forms of sexual harassment and are encouraged to do so.

The POA as an organisation have taken steps to support the NEC and branch officials in identifying sexual harassment and supporting members who report concerns. This policy forms part of the terms and conditions of staff who are employed by the POA, but it also has the potential to impact on the wider membership of the POA. An individual who wishes to report sexual harassment may need to consider which route they want to use to escalate their complaint. The POA has a wide and varied membership with recognition agreements with a number of different employers. It could be that a reporter of sexual harassment needs to decide to either progress their complaint through their employer using their associated policy and processes, or it could

be they wish to complain to the POA if they consider that a member has committed sexual harassment contrary to the Rules of the Union. (Rule 26). An employee of the POA may report sexual harassment to their employer, using this policy. They may decide to report it to their direct line manager or to an officer of the union, depending on who the complaint is about and their role in the organisation.

POA members who are not employees of the POA should report sexual harassment via their own employer's internal reporting mechanisms.

POA members may also report incidents of sexual harassment from other POA members via the POA Rules and Constitution, specifically Rule 26.

Depending on the nature and context of the allegations, it could be that more than one avenue of complaint is pursued. The important thing to note is that any allegation of the nature will be taken seriously and any reporter will be supported appropriately.

Harassment in the Equality Act 2010

Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out 3 separate strands to unlawful, discriminatory harassment.

'General' harassment - conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment — S.26(1). This applies to all protected characteristics except marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

Sexual harassment — S.26(2). This is similar to general harassment but includes a sexual (as distinct from sex-related) element.

Less favourable treatment following harassment — S.26(3). This protects individuals who are treated less favourably by their employer because they either reject or submit to sexual harassment or harassment related to gender reassignment or sex.

Sexual harassment is unlawful. It is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them whether the perpetrator intended this or not.

Sexual harassment can still be unlawful even if a person may not have intended their conduct to be offensive.

Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature covers a range of behaviours and can include:

- Sexual comments or jokes.
- The display or circulation of pornography.

- Displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photos.
- Suggestive looks, staring or leering.
- Propositions and sexual advances.
- Requests or demands for sexual favours.
- Sexual gestures
- Intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life.
- Sexual posts or contact on social media.
- Spreading sexual rumours about a person.
- Sending sexually explicit emails or text messages.
- Sexual assault including unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing.

The POA, as an employer and as a union will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment and encourages all employees and members to report any incidents of sexual harassment to their employer or union, or both.

CONFERENCE PAPER 3

Conference Paper 3 – Finances

Annual Conference Motion 38/2022 set out a finance strategy over a three-year period finishing in 2025. I am pleased that the strategy was successful and has placed the union finances in a reasonable position enabling over the last three years for the Finance Committee and NEC to invest some of our reserves into investments and fixed interest accounts. This strategy was endorsed by Annual Conference in recent years and has so far been a success. It was also a long overdue evaluation to be fair to our hard-working Branch Officials when they came to Conference and assisted the union when conducting POA business.

The POA NEC and Finance committee already know the importance of governance to maintain a high standard in protecting the future of POA finances and at the same time deliver a service along with the campaigning and representation of our members whether that is at local level, national level or strategic legal challenges to improve terms and conditions and protecting the POA membership. It is vital that we have a sound financial baseline. Over the last three years we have seen POA membership increase in all areas of the union by several thousand members. This increases our overall income. Of course, we need to maintain that growth to have a secure financial baseline.

Conference that review increased many areas of expenditure over those 3 years and keeping subscriptions at an affordable and fair level taking into account levels of expenditure throughout the year, we increased hotel rates across the country, increased the Death Benefit, increased branch rebates each year and Over 5 claims and Over 10 claims when on POA business for our branch officials and members when on union business.

Conference once again the NEC are asking you to ratify the following areas.

- **An increase to the POA Death Benefit from £5,600 to £5,800.**
- **An increase to the NEC Mileage by 3p to cover wear and tear on their vehicles from 35p to 38p.**
- **The NEC allowance to continue to accrue with the Retail Price Index effective from 1st June each year taking the figures from the January of each year.**
- **Hotel rate for Branch Officials and all POA members on official business to increase from within London which is currently £150 to £180 and outside London from £100 to £130.**
- **The overnight meal allowance for Branch Officials and all other POA members on official POA business from £36 to £40.**
- **Over 5 and Over 10 to remain at £7.00 and £15.00 respectively.**
- **The rebate to branches that rise with inflation to remain frozen until further review in 2029 with a report back to Conference that year.**

The National Executive Committee believe that the increases identified and the items that are frozen are fair, affordable and keeps pace with rising costs in funeral expenses, vehicle wear and tear and meal allowances.

That if accepted by Conference these changes are reflected in the Finance Manual and kept under review going forward.

CONFERENCE PAPER 4

Conference Paper 4 – Our International Work and the Benefits of It

INTRODUCTION

The POA has a long and proud history of defending the rights, safety, and professional standing of POA members. Traditionally, this work has been rooted in national industrial relations, legislation, and collective bargaining. However, the context in which POA members operate has fundamentally changed. Policy, security threats, privatisation models, workforce management strategies increasingly cross national boundaries. In this context, international trade union work is not an optional add on but a strategic necessity.

GLOBALISATION

Wherever POA members work, whether Prisons, NHS, immigration centres or other workplaces across the world there are remarkably similar challenges such as overcrowding, understaffing, rising violence, mental health crisis, and political pressure to do more with less. Governments frequently borrow policy ideas from other jurisdictions, often without consulting frontline staff or trade unions. By engaging internationally, the POA can anticipate policy trends, understand the real-world impact elsewhere, and challenge damaging reforms before they are imposed domestically.

Moreover, multinational corporations now play a growing role in prison services, immigration services and providers of medical health from private custody providers to security and facilities management firms. These corporations operate across borders, applying common cost cutting and workforce strategies. Without international trade union coordination, POA members risk being played off against one another in a global race to the bottom. International solidarity allows unions like the POA to confront employers and Governments.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

One of the most compelling reasons for international engagement is the sharing of best practice on health, safety, and professional standards. Violence against POA members, exposure to trauma and inadequate staffing ratios are not uniquely British problems. Through international networks, the POA can exchange evidence-based approaches to violence reduction, staff well-being, training and post incident support. International work also strengthens the POA's authority when campaigning at home. Being able to demonstrate that staffing levels, training models, or safety protocols are standard practice elsewhere provides powerful leverage in negotiations with Government and employers. It reframes demands not as unrealistic aspiration's but as internationally recognised norms.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DECENT WORK

The POA have a vital role in defending POA members' human rights in their workplaces. Poor working conditions for POA members are closely linked to poor living conditions for those in our care. International engagement enables the POA to contribute to global discussions on decent work, ethical management in our workplaces, and compliance with international labour and human rights standards. By working with global union federations and sister unions, the POA reinforces the principle that our members are skilled professionals, not disposable security labour. This international recognition strengthens the union's moral and political standing, countering narratives that seek to undermine bargaining rights or restrict industrial action in the name of public order.

SOLIDARITY AND COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

International trade unionism is ultimately about solidarity when union members and workers in one country face repression, attacks on collective rights, or unsafe working conditions, it sets a precedent that could spread elsewhere. By standing in solidarity with colleagues abroad, the POA always helps to build a collective defence of trade union rights globally. Solidarity is not one directional. The POA itself benefits from international support during disputes, political campaigns or legislative challenges. Statements of support, shared research uncoordinated pressure through international bodies can amplify the POA voice and provide protection against isolation. For example, the POA international work sending young members and delegations to Cuba to understand the international challenges that they face in workplaces assists our knowledge and show solidarity with Cubans in their workplaces. Our recent delegation to visit to prisons in Texas and Florida has assisted discussions in parliament when politicians inform us that the British prison system should be copying the Texan system regarding rehabilitation. We spoke to trade unions in Texas and they had a different story to tell which was extremely helpful to us. The National Chair attended a conference in Scandinavia to look at their system that everyone holds up as the way forward. He was a keynote speaker at the Conference. That also gave us political arguments to use against politicians and other groups who hold a shining light to the Scandinavian model It demonstrated that if you want a successful model in a workplace it has to be about investment. International work allows the POA to see for themselves how other countries operate not just in prisons but immigration, medical centres and other workplaces where our members work.

FUTURE PROOFING THE POA

For younger members in particular, internationalism reflects the reality of the world they inhabit. A union that looks outward, engages globally, addresses shared challenges is more likely to be seen as dynamic, relevant and forward-looking. International work also develops leadership capacity within the POA, equipping activists with broader perspectives and strategic skills.

CONCLUSION

The POA's international work is not a distraction from our core aims and objectives, it is an essential extension of it. In a globalised world, defending POA members' rights, safety, and professional dignity requires international awareness, cooperation and solidarity. But continuing and strengthening international engagement, the POA ensures it remains a strong, credible and effective trade union-capable not only of responding to today's challenges but of shaping the future of our members and protecting generations to come.

Conference this is a Conference paper that outlines the benefits of our international work and also gives you an update on what the NEC are doing on your behalf.