

## Case Study How to set up a Black members Self Organised Group



Rosita Ellis, Oxfordshire Health Branch on how to set up a Black members Self Organised Group (SOG)

I first became active in UNISON because I saw a Black colleague being bullied by a senior manager and I knew I had to do something. I trained as a steward and supported the member to make sure the managers behaviour changed

I noticed fairly quickly that in the healthcare sector there are a high number of Black workers, but my branch did not have a Black members SOG, so decided I would set one up.

Our first meeting was a bit disappointing, only three members turned up, but I was still convinced this was something that would help Black people in my workplace and so I was determined to grow the group.

My branch (with a little bit of help from staff in the region) helped me to identify the Black members in our branch so I could send a message about the next meeting a wider group of people.

I also decided that I would find out who the Black members were within the branch my carrying out a mapping exercise and then speak to as many of these members one-to-one

about issues they were facing in the workplace and ask if they would like to have a safe space to discuss issues of concern.

At our next meeting around 25 members turned up and there were lively discussions about people's experience of race discrimination in the NHS, how the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) was working in practice, and how our employer's disciplinary process was disproportionately impacting Black people.

This really started the ball rolling and members decided they would like to meet once a month. I asked my branch for some funding to help build momentum and the committee agreed a budget to help support our activity.

The SOG has continued to grow and meet regularly. And we now have more Black stewards in our branch as a result, with people going on to get more active in the branch and in the region.

I have now also set up a Oxfordshire county wide Black SOG group to support those branches with not many Black members and we meet for support and discuss issues within their branches.

I love our SOG meetings because I always feel empowered and energized afterwards and members say the same too. It's very rewarding to see people come along for the first time and watch their journey progress from there

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