

**ELECTION OF GENERAL SECRETARY & TREASURER 2021**

**REHANA AZAM**

**Personal Details:**

Surname / Given Name:	Azam
Forename(s) / Given Name(s):	Rehana
Branch:	NO-L19 Teesside 1
Section:	Commercial Services
Current Employer:	GMB
Current Occupation:	National Secretary
GMB Rulebook Offices held on 31 January 2021:	National Secretary; Section National Committee Member; Union Delegate to 2019 Trades Union Congress



## **Personal Statement:**

We Not Me: Building a union of all talents.

From factory floor to National Secretary, I am proud to have come through the ranks of our union. 25 years ago, GMB members elected me to speak as their representative. Through their unity I was empowered to fight for us all. I have been their voice ever since. I speak for them now.

Will Thorne and Eleanor Marx built our union's structures on foundations of unity and equality and these principles have stood the test of time. GMB's institutional record however has struggled to live up to these values.

I urge members to search for and read the 'QC Monaghan GMB Report'. It makes difficult reading but sets out the challenges ahead of us. We have been publicly shamed through our inability to address misogyny, bullying and discrimination in our own workplace.

CEC members have courageously stepped up to address these serious issues and have worked steadfastly through this difficult time in our union's history. But they need us to do the same.

This General Secretary election is unparalleled.

The Covid-19 crisis has seen the GMB at its finest. Our amazing activists, key workers and staff go above and beyond every day, missing their families, putting their lives at risk. Many have died at work to get us all through. The Health & Safety Executive has failed to investigate over 97,000 complaints of unsafe workplaces, but from the start GMB kept a Covid-19 Workplace Risk Register to ensure that their families will win justice.

We rightly take pride in our members, the best of the GMB, keeping industry moving and public services functioning. As National Secretary I am honoured to fight for them, leading and coordinating the Covid-19 industrial response across Manufacturing, Commercial and Public Services. Not a day has gone by where I have not held this Government to account for putting our members at risk, and we have emerged as the union of key workers.

But negative press and investigations have shone light on a rotten culture in our union. While my colleagues focused on supporting our members through the pandemic, others spent that time bullying, harassing and discriminating against women. We must become a role-model to employers. We must change.

I am standing because I have been approached to stand, not by GMB senior managers, but by our rank-and-file lay members and GMB staff who long for a safe workplace and a union that is the pride of our movement.

These members have placed their faith in my capabilities, experience, and sheer will to bring about change. I am seeking your Branch nomination because I am the candidate to deliver change.

Since 2015 I have led one of the most diverse and successful teams in our union, and our biggest industrial section. I have seen first-hand the benefits of embracing all talents to deliver bold strategies that secure the best terms and conditions for our members.

Under my leadership in Public Services, we have fostered a culture that celebrates the backbone of GMB, our union activism. We have strengthened the lay-member structures, empowering them to determine the direction of our union and build the next generation of GMB leaders, representatives, Branch Secretaries, and activists, formidable community leaders who should be recognised as such.

Under my leadership the GMB Public Sector punches above its weight, producing campaigns and negotiating positions that are the envy of bigger unions. Where we have led, others have followed. Where they have not, time has always proved us right.

I have spent over two decades recruiting, defending, bargaining, campaigning and organising. My track record and conviction are second to none:

2021: Used Judicial Review to force government U-turn on £95k Public Sector Pensions exit-cap.

2020/21: Successfully campaigned for a People's Bailout, the Covid-19 Furlough Scheme.

2020/21: Leading the GMB's Covid-19 response. Leading calls for a public inquiry into the Government response to Covid-19 including the disproportionate impact on Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic workers.

2020: Secured a £2.4bn win for Public Sector Pensions.

2016: Ended the Public Sector Pay Freeze with a 14.6% pay-rise for the lowest paid.

2014: Organised the biggest NHS strike since the 1970's.

2014: Organised, led and completed one of the biggest grassroots campaigns in modern political history, the Jarrow to London 'People's March for the NHS'.

2006: Won Single-Table Bargaining for our members in Higher Education.

But this election is not about past victories. We need change, real change. Those in positions of authority cannot treat colleagues as they see fit without regard for employment law or principles of unity and equality. This will not grow our union.

As a woman and a person of colour I have had more than my share of challenging institutional prejudices throughout my life. I recognise that no matter who you are, while inequality remains across our workplaces and society there is no golden age to which we should return.

With me at the helm you will hold your General Secretary to account within structures that facilitate transparent scrutiny and accountability at all levels. I will strive to help us build a union where talent is nurtured, achievement is celebrated, where no position is inaccessible to any member regardless of their identity and

background, where everyone within our great embrace is treated with respect, dignity and encouraged to give their best.

If elected as GMB General Secretary I will deliver a programme that strengthens the voice of members, empowers leaders, invests in people, and delivers campaigns that win for members across all sectors.

If you nominate me, I promise a leadership based on equality with a deliverable vision to become the union of choice for all workers, a union that is home to all. A union that embraces all talents, that is unstoppable in winning for workers. A union that unites, inspires, and grows.

If you put your faith in me, we will pioneer new grounds and build a true campaigning union at the forefront of a trade union renaissance.

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