

# Campaigning handbook 2016-2017



## Women in UNISON – active, campaigning, leading

Revised August 2016

**UNISON**  
*the public service union*

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# Introduction

## **More than two thirds of UNISON members are women.**

UNISON is proud to be the leading trade union for women. We have a solid history of women being at the heart of the union, through enshrining self-organisation into our rule book along with proportionality.

As a union which is two thirds women we do not just talk the talk. Women are the foundation on which UNISON is built.

UNISON's women members have successfully negotiated on key issues such as domestic abuse, equal pay and maternity rights.

Our group of UNISON women members (known as a self-organised group) campaigns for equality in the workplace and for improvements to women's rights

in the workplace and in the wider community.

It also supports campaigns aimed at improving women's lives – for example, to change the law to protect women experiencing domestic abuse, or to raise awareness of health issues which mainly affect women.

The campaign ideas in this guide are based on motions passed by UNISON's national women's conferences. It also contains contact details for organisations that UNISON works with that may be able to provide useful information.

All the campaign ideas in this guide are issues that have been prioritised through the democratic structures of women's self-organisation. There may be other issues that you wish to run campaigns on in your branch or region.

If you run any successful campaigns or have any good ideas you wish to share, please do let us know:

**Email: [women@unison.co.uk](mailto:women@unison.co.uk)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/unisonwomen](http://www.facebook.com/unisonwomen)**

**Twitter: [@WomenInUNISON](https://twitter.com/WomenInUNISON)**

**Website: [www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)**



**“Women are being hit hardest by government cuts and by changes that restrict access to justice, like those to the legal aid scheme. It’s a vile by-product of austerity, but above all it is a political choice.**

**“Every year, too many women die as a result of domestic violence. The lack of preventative and supportive services mean women and their children often suffer in silence. Cuts to local councils have meant fewer domestic violence workers, fewer refuges and fewer options for women to protect themselves and their families. This increasingly desperate situation makes trying to leave a manipulative abusive partner even harder...**

**... “But unfortunately this government has no interest in helping the most vulnerable, and it**

**seems that women are very definitely not top of the list.**

**“In the workplace, sex discrimination claims have plummeted by 83 per cent. Not because there’s been a huge decline in discrimination – if only – but because of punitive employment tribunal fees. Forcing women to pay upfront before they can take a case means it is now much harder to get justice – leaving unscrupulous employers free to continue to treat workers badly.**

**“But no bill, cut or law will ever stop UNISON fighting. We will never stop fighting for those who care about equality in the workplace, about maternity leave and the gender pay gap.”**

Dave Prentis, general secretary, speaking at the National Women’s Conference, 2016

# Effective campaigning – the basics

When you campaign you are trying to persuade people to take a particular course of action in relation to a particular issue. You are also trying to change people's attitudes or opinions.

## **When you campaign your tools are information, argument and publicity.**

Many branch activists are experienced in running campaigns on both local and national issues. However, it's always useful to review your approach, so below are a few basic tips.

Those of you who are new to publicity and campaigning, will find the much more detailed UNISON guide, 'Effective campaigning' (available from the online catalogue [www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue) stock number 2916) particularly helpful.

This guide is in no way intended to be a final word – as with any campaign there should be room for everybody to contribute ideas.

## **Objectives are the focus**

- A campaign is built on its objectives. Make sure everyone knows the issues around the campaign. Encourage member activity in support of the campaign.

- Objectives also make it possible to review the campaign. Are we achieving what we set out to achieve? The campaign can also have the added benefit of building organisation within the branch and raising the profile of UNISON.
- You need to know where you're going, so you know when you've got there...and when to stop!

## **A campaign plan is essential**

- You will need to create a flexible plan which lists key dates, proposed activities, resources and responsibilities. This means that everyone is aware of the intended progress of the campaign and can prepare for events. It also makes it possible to identify shortfalls in resources.
- Make sure you know about relevant dates and opportunities to get your campaign on track. For example, are there certain meetings your branch might want to attend or lobby? Are there regional UNISON events you could attend to get support from other members or branches? Is there a local event that could provide a useful 'hook' for your campaign?

## Who does the planning?

Obviously it is up to the branch activists and committee to agree to a campaign plan. But it may be easier to form a sub-committee or working party to focus primarily on drawing up the plan.

Don't make your planning sub-committee too big. Six to eight committed people is the maximum you need, otherwise you will just be setting up an unwieldy group. The team could then take the plan to the rest of the branch for discussion and agreement.

Drawing up a plan document would be impossible to do from scratch in a full committee or branch meeting. A small group allows flexibility to meet as and when necessary. The group can continue to meet as events progress, adapting the plan or co-opting others as and when necessary. They can also review each phase as it happens and

report back to the rest of the branch.

Of course this may not be appropriate for your particular branch. Or you may wish to work with other branches on this basis. Choose whatever suits everyone best. Some branches agree to free up specific individuals in these situations, sharing out their work so they have more time to concentrate on the campaign.

Don't forget to involve regional staff. Are there organising staff who can help you? They may also have experience of working on campaigns.

## Communications — or how to get your message across

It is important to think about who your target audience is and what you want to communicate. Communications may be viewed as 'internal' ie within UNISON



(either the branch, the region, or nationally) or 'external' ie outside UNISON (eg the employers, local or national media, trades councils, other trade unions etc.) or a combination of both.

You may want to think about using some of the following methods:

- Press releases, to tell the media about specific events in your campaign or a compelling story in your branch. Don't forget that journalists are interested in anything that will make a story, so think carefully about what interests their readers.
- Briefing meetings for activists and members. Do you want to invite a guest speaker along? What issues do you want to tell people about?
- Could you create any photo opportunities to attract the attention of the press and public but also to provide your branch with stock photographs to be used in your publicity?

Other ideas: newsletters, circulars, emails, noticeboards, word of mouth, workplace meetings, pre-printed envelopes, social events, posters, leaflets, advertising, blogs, website comments, radio phone-ins, writing to newspapers, texts, tweets, facebook and other social media.

## **What do you want to communicate?**

Think about:

- the aims of your campaign

- back-up information which can fill gaps
- key dates in the campaign timetable
- who is responsible for what
- how the campaign aids recruitment and retention
- messages of support from outside the branch
- appeals for financial support.

## **Who do you want to tell?**

It is worthwhile spending some time identifying the following in relation to your campaign:

- **Direct target**

The group or individual who needs to act to enable you to meet your goal. For example: an anti-BNP campaign might have as its direct target the voting public.

- **Indirect target**

Other groups or individuals your campaign has to reach, because they are influential in enabling you to reach your direct target. For example, it might be the press, and another might be other political parties or other unions. You may not agree with everything the indirect target says, but they can help you get to your direct target, so you need a relationship with them.

- **Allies**

These are your close friends, that you would trust enough to share your campaign plans with.



## Raising public awareness

There are various ways in which you can raise public awareness and obtain further support. Many activities will be similar to those that you run in the workplace except that they have a wider audience.

They could include:

- putting on an exhibition, for example in the local library
- running a street stall
- having a stand at a local event such as a May Day rally or summer fair
- handing out leaflets or stickers
- getting people to sign a petition
- organising a public meeting with a keynote speaker
- participating in local seminars and other events, for example by

providing speakers, by having an information stand or by sending delegates who will make a contribution from the floor

- providing speakers to local groups, schools and colleges
- holding some form of demonstration or visual stunt
- publicising your activities in the local media.

Hold a sponsored event or get your message printed on T-shirts, caps, badges, mugs or pens which you can sell to supporters – it can all help publicise your campaign as well as raise funds for further activities.

A public event can also provide an opportunity to involve other campaigning groups and local or national celebrities, as well as being a good story for the local media.

A survey is a very good way to raise awareness and to obtain evidence to strengthen your case. The survey does not need to be complicated – in fact the shorter and simpler the survey form is, the more likely people are to fill it in.

Another way to raise awareness is to hold a special meeting. The meetings might be branch or open meetings to which non-members are also invited.

The speaker could be someone from within the union, including someone from another branch or someone from an outside organisation. You could also show a video, as an event in itself or as part of the special meeting.

## Lobbying

The reason for lobbying your MP is in order to get them to take some action, so you need to understand exactly what MPs can do before you decide whether lobbying your MP is appropriate.

The sorts of things that MPs can do are:

- write to a minister and get a personal reply
- ask a written or an oral parliamentary question
- put down an Early Day Motion
- present a Private Member's bill
- present a Ten Minute Rule bill
- sponsor or speak in a parliamentary debate.

You will have to decide the best way to lobby your MP – how to contact them, where to contact them and in what

capacity. You will also have to decide whether it is best to lobby them as individual constituents or as a campaign group or both. You could:

- write to them at their constituency or the House of Commons
- visit them at their constituency surgery (an appointment is advisable)
- visit them at the House of Commons (always make an appointment first)
- join a mass lobby being organised nationally
- invite them to a meeting.



MPs do take notice of letters, especially individual letters from their constituents. And the more they get, the more likely they are to take notice.

It may be useful to lobby your MEP in some circumstances. MEPs are less likely to hold a local surgery because their constituency is too large. However,

they will have a local office and you could make an appointment to meet them there. To find out who your MEP is and where to write to them, contact your local council.

You can ask an MEP to:

- vote in a certain way on legislation
- represent your opinion in committee discussions on new laws
- put you in touch with other MEPs interested in your campaign's issue.

The best way to get in touch with your MEP is by writing. It will give them time to brief themselves on the issue you've raised.

There are also various groups of professionals that you might wish to approach as part of a campaign. Lobbying a local organisation can be less confrontational than lobbying individuals and more productive than lobbying their national body. The first step is to identify your targets and then to decide what message you want to get across to them.

You should try to:

- gain their understanding of, and sympathy for, the issues
- propose action that they can take as part of their daily professional lives
- work with, rather than against, them.

## Importance of recruitment

No UNISON campaign can neglect the importance of recruitment and retention of members. Running a well-planned

and high profile campaign in itself demonstrates that UNISON is worth joining. UNISON campaigns should show members that their concerns are being addressed and hence aid retention.



Recruitment opportunities need to be identified in your planning and also picked up on, as they arise in the course of your activity.

See our joining page for more information: [www.unison.org.uk/join](http://www.unison.org.uk/join)

## Evaluation

The importance of reviewing cannot be overstressed. There's no point reinventing the wheel, so ensure that you learn from your and others'

experiences. At every stage your plan needs to be looked at and the activities reviewed. We can all learn from successes and mistakes.

Think about how you might review activities. You will need to ask:

- was the campaign a success?
- did we achieve all our objectives?
- what worked well?
- what mistakes did we make?
- what could we have done better?
- what lessons have we learned?

For example, did you run a recruitment stall but nobody turned up? Where did you put it? What time was it there? How did you publicise it? Where did you publicise it?

And don't forget that successes need to be shared with others. Don't assume that you were the last to think of an idea. Get your rep to report it to your regional self-organised group committee or the regional recruitment and organisation committee.

And don't forget to tell UNISON InFocus, the magazine for activists.



# Women and the cuts

The government claims to be fair and family-friendly, but the spending cuts that have already taken place and those still planned, hit women the hardest, particularly Black women and low paid women and their families.

The Women's Budget Group has continued to criticise the government's lack of meaningful gender impact assessment of their budgetary decisions. Recent spending reviews have penalised lone mothers and single female pensioners the most, due to the harsh cuts in public services.

Most of the job growth for women since 2010 has been in low-paying sectors, such as the outsourced health and social

care sector where pay and conditions for care workers are poor.

But cuts to social care funding has also forced more women to step in as unpaid caregivers when services fail through a lack of proper investment in the social services infrastructure.

Meanwhile analysis of labour market statistics suggests that there has been a shift towards increased underemployment and wider use of insecure forms of employment such as temporary, casual or zero hours contracts, particularly for women. The number of Black workers, underemployed or in low-paid jobs, agency work and temporary work has also disproportionately increased.



Women are more likely than men to work in the public sector, making up at least 65%. People from Black communities are also more likely to work in the public sector - 40% of employed Black people as compared to 25% of white people. But public sector employment now stands lower than at any point in the last four decades.

The scrapping of student nurse bursaries at a time when the NHS is struggling to cope with a nursing shortage will only exacerbate this shortage in an area of work traditionally dominated by women, so again hitting women the hardest.



Meanwhile the employment tribunal fee of £1,200 has deterred women claimants, with 84% fewer equal pay claims, 81%

fewer sex discrimination claims, 26% fewer pregnancy dismissal and detriment claims.

At the same time restrictions to the Legal Aid Scheme have had a negative impact on women trying to leave abusive relationships. But domestic violence tends to increase during difficult periods for society, such as recessions. In these austere times with cuts to police and the criminal justice system and to services, vital support mechanisms have diminished or disappeared at a time when they are most needed by women.

Overall, the cuts and austerity measures are leaving the majority of women without support, placing them at risk and plunging them into poverty. The Fawcett Society has called the impact a 'triple jeopardy' to highlight a threefold attack on women via job cuts in the public sector, a reduction in the core public services that women rely on themselves and those they care for, and slashed benefits – all of which threatens a huge step back in women's equality.

The number of people attending food banks for emergency support has tripled in the period from 2012 to 2015 according to the Trussell Trust. The Trust also highlight in their research that by moving from a minimum wage to a Living Wage, 4.8

million women nationally could see their income raised by 4 billion pounds.



But, under minimum wages, when it comes to prioritising essential items such as food and bills, women's dignity and health issues are also being ignored. One of the most expensive items a woman has to buy is sanitary protection and with teenage daughters, the cost to a family can be phenomenal. Yet VAT at 5% is also still charged on sanitary products.

The introduction by the government of the so called 'tampon tax' to use this money to fund violence against women services, highlights the need for secure central funding whereby women's services are seen as the responsibility of all of society.

Although the government then announced that VAT on sanitary products would be scrapped, they have since gone quiet on when or if this will happen.

## **Women and the housing crisis**

The UK is suffering from an acute housing crisis, with rents soaring and house building grinding to a halt as a direct result of the recession, whilst the number of new households is increasing faster than the number of new builds.

Against a background of mounting debt across the country, huge numbers of homeowners are having their homes repossessed. This is particularly the case for women with children whose relationships have ended and who are unable to keep up with their mortgage repayments on a reduced income, or those who have become unemployed due to public sector job cuts.

Recent research found that spiralling rental costs and stagnant wage growth mean 1.6 million households are forced to spend more than half their disposable income on housing – and single women, particularly those from low and middle income brackets, are among the worst affected. Research by Shelter also found that over 1 million households had borrowed from a payday loan company in 2013 just to meet their housing costs.

The combination of low and frozen pay; reduction of housing benefits; the so-called bedroom tax and the lack of affordable housing to buy and rent has contributed to this situation.

As a consequence, many women are being forced into shared accommodation, which is frequently unsuitable and may

increase the vulnerability of women and their children.

And with changes to housing allowances for people under 35, young women who may be subjected to physical or sexual abuse, or LGBT women excluded from their family home will particularly suffer.

At the sharpest end, many hundreds of women sleep rough on the streets every night, fearing for their safety.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Raise awareness at national and local level of the impact of cuts on women's lives particularly women from Black communities, and how the loss of posts traditionally held by women are impacting on services.
- Gather information from regional women's groups on the impact of the cuts on women's lives, the extent of redundancies and the reduction in pay and hours within the public and voluntary sectors that particularly impact on women members, including those experiencing double disadvantage, such as Black, disabled and LGBT women.
- Work more closely with other regional self-organised groups and the young members forum, with UNISON's service groups, other unions and trade union networks where appropriate, to campaign against the increasing drive for private rather than public sector provision and to protect those services used primarily by women and provided primarily by women.
- Use The Women's Budget Group's toolkit for women's groups 'Women and local cuts, Challenging Gender Equality Impact Assessments & Local Government Budgets' available to download from <http://wbg.org.uk/budget-analysis/english-local-government-budgets/>
- Campaign to protect those services used primarily by women, and provided primarily by women (including Sure Start centres) which support women caring for children who are facing challenges in that care.
- Make contact with local Women's Aid and Rape Crisis centres to support any fundraising events they are holding and support their campaigns against cuts in funding for specialist services.
- Support campaigns for the restoration of Legal Aid for family issues including domestic abuse without the current stringent requirement for proof of domestic abuse.
- Continue to organise women workers in the homecare service sector, support the UNISON campaigns for more funding and better quality homecare services, and promote the Ethical Care Charter.
- Investigate and raise awareness of the issues of the impact of cuts on the social work profession, issue guidance to women members on the steps that they can take to protect their health and their professional careers.
- Encourage members who can afford to do so to support food banks with donations of less popular items – particularly sanitary protection,

toiletries, baby products, which are often overlooked by donors.

- Encourage your branch or regional women's group to link up with local food co-ops.
- Promote and work with the Valuing Maternity Campaign to campaign for properly funded and resourced maternity services.
- Work with individual members, regional women's committees and networks to lobby government ministers about the need to provide secure, affordable, decent housing for all, to increase regulation in the private sector and to ensure that the housing needs of women are taken into account in housing policy.
- Lobby government to address the under-representation of young Black women on apprenticeships, and to consider race equality in public procurement to improve employment levels for Black workers.
- Encourage women members to get involved in decision-making bodies such as in the new NHS or groups representing our communities, schools and health bodies, so that they can influence the future of our public services.
- Campaign for a national local authority house building programme and more local authority housing provision.
- Encourage women to use their vote as a way to make political change.
- Negotiate with employers to provide salary advance schemes to their staff, where a short term advance on pay is

provided as an alternative to seeking a loan.

- Renew and increase efforts in the campaign for a Living Wage for low paid workers and a decent pay increase for all workers in line with the cost of living.
- Continue to highlight campaigns to remove VAT on sanitary products.
- Help ensure that members are aware of the assistance available to them in crisis via branch welfare officers or UNISON Welfare 'There for You', including the credit union service.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## ***More information***



- **Women and public spending cuts**  
[www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues)
- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)
- **Save care now campaign**  
[www.savecarenow.org.uk](http://www.savecarenow.org.uk)
- **Fighting cuts and privatisation in the NHS**  
[www.unison.org.uk/at-work/health-care/key-issues/fighting-cuts-and-privatisation-in-the-nhs](http://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/health-care/key-issues/fighting-cuts-and-privatisation-in-the-nhs)

- **Save our Local Services**

[www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/save-our-local-services/](http://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/save-our-local-services/)

- **Save the NHS bursary**

[www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/save-the-nhs-bursary/](http://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/save-the-nhs-bursary/)

- **The Living Wage**

[www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/the-living-wage/](http://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/the-living-wage/)

- **There for you**

Offering a unique confidential advice and support service just for members of UNISON and their dependants.

[www.unison.org.uk/there-for-you](http://www.unison.org.uk/there-for-you)



The voice of Britain at work. With 51 affiliated unions representing nearly 6 million working people from all walks of life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

The Trade Union Congress

Congress House

Great Russell Street

London WC1B 3LS

Tel: 020 7636 4030

[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- **Women and the Cuts toolkit**

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/tuc-women-and-cuts-toolkit](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/tuc-women-and-cuts-toolkit)

- **Women and Poverty**

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/poverty](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/poverty)



Women's Budget Group

The WBG brings together feminist economists, researchers, policy experts and activists to work towards our vision of a gender equal society in which women's financial independence gives them greater autonomy at work, home, and in civil society.

Email: [admin@wbg.org.uk](mailto:admin@wbg.org.uk)

[www.wbg.org.uk](http://www.wbg.org.uk)



The UK's leading charity for women's equality and rights at home, at work and in public life.

The Fawcett Society

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[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)



The leading national umbrella body for women's charities, with over 500 members.

Women's Resource Centre

United House

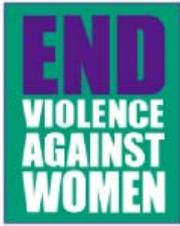
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[www.wrc.org.uk](http://www.wrc.org.uk)



A unique coalition of organisations and individuals campaigning to end all forms of violence against women.

End Violence Against Women Coalition  
3rd Floor, Tindlemannor  
52-54 Featherstone Street  
London EC1Y 8RT  
Tel: 020 7096 2067  
Email: [admin@evaw.org.uk](mailto:admin@evaw.org.uk)  
[www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)



The UK's leading charity committed to ending inequality and improving the health and well-being of pregnant women, partners and young children – from conception through to the child's early years.

Maternity Action  
52-54 Featherstone Street  
London EC1Y 8RT  
Tel: 020 7253 2288  
Email: [info@maternityaction.org.uk](mailto:info@maternityaction.org.uk)  
[www.maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.maternityaction.org.uk)



A women's charity aiming to provide women with the legal advice and information they need to understand and use the law and their legal rights. They also work to improve the law for women and increase women's access to justice.  
[www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)



The housing and homelessness charity.  
[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)



The national charity for single homeless people.  
[www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)



Campaigning for professionally managed, secure, decent and affordable private rented homes in sustainable communities.  
[www.generationrent.org](http://www.generationrent.org)

# Women in the workplace

## Working hours

The relentless cuts and austerity measures continue to impact on the ability of many women to remain in employment and those that are in work, come under enormous pressure to over-perform and work long hours.

Women working in the NHS, local government and voluntary sectors are seeing the move towards a 24-hour/7-day service being implemented at a rapid rate. More and more requests for flexible working are being turned down as they are seen as not meeting the needs of the service. Significant changes to working practices with 24-hour shift patterns, are creating increasingly disproportionate difficulties for women, who generally have more caring responsibilities and demands.

## Flexible working

Flexible working gives women workers the ability to fit their work life around home life, particularly crucial as women continue to take the lion share of caring responsibilities for both children and elderly relatives.

However too many employers view flexible working as only benefiting the employee. Some employers even believe that a desire to work flexibly implies a lack of commitment.

Apart from enhancing work-life balance for employees, with the added health benefits,

and reducing the need to travel, flexible working can significantly improve productivity, enabling organisations to reduce costs, for example with home working, whilst improving efficiency and boosting motivation and morale.

Despite numerous attempts to ensure that employers have a consistent approach to dealing with flexible working requests, there are still widespread differences. It is important for all women to be aware of their rights both in requesting flexible working and achieving a satisfactory outcome.

## Zero hours contracts

A 'zero hours contract' is a permanent (as opposed to casual) contract with no defined hours, but instead a requirement made by the employer that the employee will work hours as set by the employer. These hours may alter from day to day, or week to week.

In the public sector there has been an increase in the use of zero hours or permanent variable hours contracts as a means of avoiding compulsory redundancies, reducing costs and maximising profits. What zero hour contracts in truth offer workers is insecure, low paid employment.

Under these contracts, there is no guarantee of earned income or regular hours, making it difficult to arrange

dependant care, benefit from cheaper travel or opportunities at work such as training, as well as having a detrimental impact on work-life balance. This practice also saves the employer money as zero hours contracts can avoid 'on-costs' such as sick pay, holiday pay and pension contributions.

Local authorities are not the only ones using zero hours or variable hours contracts. Surveys have found that the second highest proportion of workers on zero hour contracts work in the health sector and the third highest work in education. The evidence also suggests that more women than men are employed on these types of contracts.

Some evidence shows that unscrupulous employers are using these contracts to remove employees with health and disability issues from the workplace, imposing them on individuals as the only alternative to redundancy but then never subsequently contacting them for work. Women members who are reliant on paid employment are being faced with difficult

decisions, whether to accept the contract to avoid redundancy although regular employment is not guaranteed, or leaving voluntarily and having to wait to be eligible to claim state benefits.

## Equal pay

It has been 40 years since the Equal Pay Act came into force and the gender pay gap has closed by approximately 10% in that time, not least because of the efforts of UNISON championing equal pay for its women members, winning a series of landmark cases and forcing employers to introduce equality proofed pay systems.

However the narrowing of the gender pay gap has virtually come to a standstill in the last 15 years. It is also at its highest for those women between the ages of 40-49 and those in managerial positions.

## A Living Wage

The stereotype that young workers are of less worth than older workers is enshrined in the National Minimum Wage legislation, which prescribes age-related differentials.





This has been compounded by the government's decision to introduce a further age-related tier of the minimum wage (mis-named the 'living wage' even though it is below the accepted Living Wage rate set by the Living Wage Foundation.)

### **Reasonable adjustments**

The TUC's comprehensive research on disability and employment published in May 2015 showed that whilst the employment rate, for all disabled people is much lower than non-disabled, people with mental ill-health fare the worst.

Employers need to fully comply with their duty to provide reasonable adjustments for all disabled workers, particularly disabled women workers with mental ill-health.

### **Bullying and harassment**

With increasing numbers of workers in the public sector accepting redundancy and voluntary severance because of the cuts,

those women who are left in the workplace are experiencing an increase in stress as work pressures mount. Bullying, in its various manifestations has noticeably increased.

In particular it is noted that young women in the workplace are patronised, harassed and bullied, reinforcing stereotypes that young workers are of less worth than older workers.

This is also affecting vulnerable clients, as members may hesitate to raise concerns about unsafe working practices due to the cuts.

### **Health and safety**

A substantial number of our women members work in jobs which contain all the factors of hazardous working, including risks from chemicals, manual handling, fatigue, infection risks, violence and stress. Because of the type of work that women traditionally do, women are more likely to suffer work-related stress, musculoskeletal

disorders and health problems such as dermatitis.

But in the workplace, employer liability and risk assessment duties are being substantially weakened, whilst enforcement of health and safety law is increasingly left up to significantly diminished and less effective HSE and Local Authority Officers.

## **Workplace dress codes**

Many women workers do not wish to dress in accordance with gendered stereotypes of what is 'appropriate women's dress'. Yet some employers continue to have dress codes with a number of gender-specific requirements that have no place in a modern, progressive society. Such dress codes are often difficult or impossible to follow for some women, many non-binary workers and trans women who are at the beginning of, or are considering social gender transition.

Employers should only have dress codes that serve a legitimate purpose, such as maintaining a desired image with customers and clients, or aiding staff visibility, and this can be attained without gender-specific dress requirements. Staff should be able to choose from what has been historically defined as the 'male' or 'female' items without the need to explain why.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Use equality impact assessments to help ensure that women are not disproportionately affected by cuts and workplace policy changes.

- Promote policies within the workplace to support the healthy work-life balance for women members and that protect the working conditions of our women members.
- Campaign for an end to the age discriminatory bandings in the National Minimum Wage, and for the payment of a real Living Wage.
- Raise awareness of the right to request flexible working and the procedure for flexible working requests in the workplace.
- Review flexible working policies and implementation, and negotiate with employers for increased opportunities for flexible working, particularly taking into account any disproportionate impact on women workers of the implementation of shift patterns.
- Identify areas of good practice and share with other workplace representatives in your branch or region.
- Work with employers to set up scrutiny panels to measure the effectiveness of policies which protect and support the right of women to work and develop within the workplace.
- Monitor and review pay structures and raise awareness of information and training available to branches to enable equal pay audits to be carried out.
- Raise awareness of the Access to Work help available for women with mental health impairments, and actively support disabled women in the workplace in accessing training, career progression and reasonable adjustments.

- Campaign and lobby for the strengthening of health and safety protections in the workplace, and demand that gender factoring is taken into account in workplace risk assessments.
- Highlight the relevance to women of health and safety legislation and encourage more women members to become health and safety reps.
- Raise awareness and help women recognise the signs of bullying and harassment, and to know what actions they can take.
- Encourage employers to use and follow bullying and harassment or dignity at work workplace policies.
- Ask for a dedicated steward or branch officer at your branch, responsible for supporting women to address their specific problems including sexism in the workplace, and ensure that training is available for that role.
- Highlight the need for a gender-neutral dress and uniform policy in the workplace.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

### ***More information***



- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

- **Sex discrimination**  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/discrimination/gender-discrimination](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/discrimination/gender-discrimination)
- **Bullying and harassment**  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/discrimination/bullying-and-harassment](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/discrimination/bullying-and-harassment)
- **Flexible working**  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/working-patterns](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/working-patterns)
- **Equal Pay**  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/pay/equal-pay](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/pay/equal-pay)
- **Vulnerable workers**  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/vulnerable-workers](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/vulnerable-workers)
- **Health and safety**  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety)



The voice of Britain at work. With 51 affiliated unions representing nearly 6 million working people from all walks of life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

The Trade Union Congress  
 Congress House  
 Great Russell Street  
 London WC1B 3LS  
 Tel: 020 7636 4030  
[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- **Gender equality**

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality)

- **Bullying**

[www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/bullying](http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/bullying)



**working families**

The UK's leading work-life balance organisation. The charity helps working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work.  
[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

Working Families  
Cambridge House  
1 Addington Square  
London SE5 0HF  
Tel: 020 7253 7243  
Legal advice for parents & carers: 0300 012 0312  
or [advice@workingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@workingfamilies.org.uk)

Working Families (Scotland) / Family Friendly Working Scotland  
Robertson House  
152 Bath Street  
Glasgow G2 4TB  
0141 353 5627



The UK's leading charity committed to ending inequality and improving the health and well-being of pregnant women, partners and young children – from conception through to the child's early years.

Maternity Action  
52-54 Featherstone Street  
London EC1Y 8RT  
Tel: 020 7253 2288  
Email: [info@maternityaction.org.uk](mailto:info@maternityaction.org.uk)  
[www.maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.maternityaction.org.uk)



### **The Health and Safety Executive**

The national independent watchdog for work-related health, safety and illness. It provides information and advice and also produces leaflets and detailed guidance on health and safety law.  
[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

# Women and welfare reform

Women rely more on tax credit and benefits than men, in particular due to their caring responsibilities, relative economic inequalities and poverty. Working tax credits and child tax credits are also designed to help low-paid workers and low-income families. Millions of women are dependent on both of these tax credits.

However the government's welfare reforms, benefit cap, introduction of universal credit and changes to tax credits is having a damaging effect on women, their families and their lives.

For example, 92% of single parent families are women and are therefore more likely to be welfare dependant. The universal credit scheme will have a disproportionate impact on low-income families, as money often runs out before the weekend and a single monthly payment makes managing a family budget harder.

The introduction of payments to only one person in a household, can threaten women's financial security if their partner insists on being the person receiving payment and refuses to meet household bills, reinforcing the 'male breadwinner' model. The evidence is that when money is short, women often go without: women tend to be the 'shock absorbers' of

poverty.

Universal Credit will also add to the complexity around access to passported benefits, including energy efficiency schemes. These initiatives include warm home discount to help with electricity bills over the winter period and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), a government scheme to improve energy efficiency in the home including the provision of replacement boilers, saving money on heating bills.

Already the changes made to working tax credit, requiring couples to work at least 24 hours between them (with 1 of the couple working at least 16 hours), has meant that hundreds of thousands of women and children have lost out. To expect workers to find additional working hours in a time of cuts and job losses was unrealistic, yet these families have been targeted for a significant cut in their household income.

Changes to working tax credit earning's threshold and the number of children in a family covered by child tax credits will also impact hard on households, particularly single parents and those on low income.

And meanwhile, thousands of women in work continue to suffer poverty, low pay and lack of job security.



## **Housing benefit and young women**

The removal of housing benefit for young people between the ages of 18 and 21 will put vulnerable women at further risk whilst making more young women vulnerable.

Young women may be escaping abuse at home, be thrown out of their family home, be care leavers or migrants. Many families are now unable to maintain a spare room for use in crisis since the implementation of the infamous 'bedroom tax'. Whilst homelessness is dangerous for all people, it impacts disproportionately on young women as they could be more likely to be at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, fleeing, one abusive relationship into another, by being forced in shared accommodation.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Raise awareness of the implication of the introduction of universal credit, changes to working tax credit and child tax credit, as well as wider welfare reform and cuts such as the shared accommodation rate, the bedroom tax and the removal of housing benefit for young women.
- Campaign against the changes and monitor their impact on UNISON members.
- Work with individual members, regional women's committees and networks to lobby government ministers about the effect the welfare reforms are having on women and their families.

- Work with UNISON's Labour Link and Young Members to condemn the removal of housing benefit for young women and to lobby against this policy.
- Liaise with local community organisations and public sector alliances to support those most in need, and campaign jointly to raise public awareness of the impact that this government's welfare reforms are having on the most vulnerable in our society.
- Continue the campaign for decent pay for our members, including a real Living Wage.
- Work with Labour Link to campaign for a fair and just tax system that tackles inequality and supports the most vulnerable.
- Help ensure that members are aware of the assistance available to them in crisis via branch welfare officers or UNISON Welfare 'There for You'.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

### **More information**



- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

- **There for you**  
There for You offers a unique confidential advice and support service just for

members of UNISON and their dependants.  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/services-support/there-for-you)



The WBG brings together feminist economists, researchers, policy experts and activists to work towards our vision of a gender equal society in which women's financial independence gives them greater autonomy at work, home, and in civil society.

Email: [admin@wbg.org.uk](mailto:admin@wbg.org.uk)  
[www.wbg.org.uk](http://www.wbg.org.uk)



The UK's leading charity for women's equality and rights at home, at work and in public life.

The Fawcett Society  
Studio 204, The Print Rooms  
164-180 Union Street  
London SE1 0LH  
Tel: 0203 598 6154  
Email: [info@fawcettsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@fawcettsociety.org.uk)  
[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)



The leading charity working with single parent families. Supporting, advising and campaigning with single mums and dads to help them meet their family's needs.

Gingerbread  
520 Highgate Studios  
53-79 Highgate Road  
London NW5 1TL  
Tel: 020 7428 5420

Wales office: 02920 471900  
Single parents' helpline: 0808 802 0925  
[www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)



Providing help to all single parent families in Scotland; mums, dads, young parents and kinship carers.

One Parent Families Scotland  
13 Gayfield Square  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3NX  
Helpline: 0808 801 0323  
Helpline Email: [helpline@opfs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@opfs.org.uk)  
Tel: 0131 556 3899  
Email: [info@opfs.org.uk](mailto:info@opfs.org.uk)  
[www.opfs.org.uk](http://www.opfs.org.uk)



The leading national charity working to end poverty among children, young people and families in the UK.

[www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk)

Child Poverty Action Group  
30 Micawber Street  
London  
N1 7TB  
Tel: 020 7837 7979  
Email: [info@cpag.org.uk](mailto:info@cpag.org.uk)

CPAG in Scotland  
Unit 9, Ladywell  
94 Duke Street  
Glasgow G4 0UW  
Tel: 0141 552 3303  
Email: [staff@cpagscotland.org.uk](mailto:staff@cpagscotland.org.uk)

# Raising the profile of women in society

Women's rights have never been easily won. Most, if not all have been as a consequence of years of struggle. Over the last hundred or so years, women have won the right to vote and have made progress on many other workplace equality issues.

However, women's equality can all too quickly be eroded and rolled back. The cuts to services are amounting to an unparalleled attack on the position of women in society. Women are being prevented from fulfilling their potential and undermining the gains that women have made especially in balancing employment and their caring responsibilities.

In spite of the continued existence of discrimination against women and the

barriers to women's participation at all levels of society, women are continuing to make progress in taking up leadership roles. This is important in not only challenging the predominance of male power in our society, but also in providing positive role models for young women.

Lifelong learning and education of women is also key to increasing women's confidence and self-esteem which can lead to further learning and assist with career progression.

## **CEDAW**

In July 2013, the UK government was called to give evidence to a UN committee with regard to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination





Against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW report highlighted a number of key areas of concern for the UK:

- Austerity and women
- Legal aid and employment tribunal fees
- Abolition of the National Women's Commission
- The UK national strategy for implementation of the Convention
- Women only shortlists
- Violence against women
- Female genital mutilation
- Human trafficking
- Women into public life
- Employment and economic empowerment
- Health care
- Women in prisons
- Disadvantaged groups of women
- Welfare reform

UNISON and the TUC participated in the process of submitting a 'shadow report' along with partner NGOs and co-ordinated by the Women's Resource Centre, to which UNISON is affiliated. This shadow report drew attention to the government's failings as identified in the CEDAW report, and work now continues to put pressure on the government to take the necessary action to meet the recommendations.

A subsequent shadow report from the Women's Resource Centre in June 2016, particularly focused on Legal Aid reforms and women's access to justice.

## Women in prison

The last Labour government commissioned the Corston Report which recommended small, multifunctional non-custodial centres for women to be widely dispersed across the country. However

governments since have failed to implement many of the recommendations of the report. A significant proportion of women convicted of non-violent crimes and who pose no risk to society are still being incarcerated.

The evidence is already out there - for the vast majority of women in the criminal justice system, solutions in the community would be much more appropriate.

Many of these women were themselves victims - of abuse, manipulation and violence. Some women have been forced to use crime as a means to escape their exploiters or as a cry for help. But, because a different approach - such as through the work of women's centres - requires secure funding in an era of heartless austerity, women and their children continue to suffer.

Women in custody are more likely to have a mental health problem compared with women in the general population. Half have attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

Statistics from the Women in Prison campaign group reveal that for 85% of mothers in prison, prison was the first time they had been separated from their children for any significant length of period. Imprisoning mothers for non-violent offences has a damaging impact on children and carries a cost to the state of more than £17 million over a ten year period.

Prison is a cruel and unjust punishment for the vast majority of women affected by the criminal justice system. Imprisonment should be used only in cases where

women pose a threat to public safety. The majority of women should be dealt with in the community, in programmes specifically designed to meet their needs.

## **Women and the sex trade**

UNISON has set policy on prostitution at both national women's conference and national delegate's conference. We have taken the stance that prostitution is a form of violence against women and support the idea of tackling demand through adopting a Nordic style law that decriminalised the sale of sex and criminalises the buyers and pimps while funding exit strategies. In countries where this has been implemented, it has been proved to be successful in reducing the demand for prostitution and changing public attitudes towards the sex trade.

In contrast, in Germany and New Zealand where they have fully decriminalised or legalised prostitution activity they have seen an increase in trafficking, organised crime and inflation of both the legal and illegal trade, with no tangible evidence that women are safer.

## **Women in the media**

The growing sexualisation of women and girls in the media promotes attitudes which underpin and legitimise gender inequality and violence against women by portraying women as objects and not real people.

Online porn is disturbingly cruel and violent, teaching that a woman's sole purpose is to be used, abused and perpetrated upon for a man's pleasure. Internet porn in the UK receives more traffic than social networks, shopping,

news and media, email, finance, gaming and travel.

Increasingly our society is becoming desensitised to this bombardment from the sex industry and normalising of pornographic images. The pornography industry has pushed its way into our lives, distorting our concept of sex and sexuality. Pornography offers people a vision of sexuality rooted in men's domination of women and women's acceptance of their degradation.

No one claims that all men who use pornography become rapists, or that rape would disappear if there were no pornography. But being exposed to powerful and sexually stimulating messages on a regular basis has significant effects on attitudes and behaviour in the real world.

Studies show that after viewing

pornography, men are more likely to report:

- decreased empathy for rape victims
- a belief that a woman who dresses provocatively deserves to be raped
- anger at women who flirt but then refuse to have sex
- decreased sexual interest in their girlfriends or wives
- increased interest in coercing partners into unwanted sex acts.

And women often feel like they don't measure up to the writhing, oiled, voluptuous female bodies in this pornified culture. Some women report that this self-objectification goes so deep that during sex they are less concerned with what they feel than with how their bodies look.

With no statutory sex education around the harms of pornography, and the normalisation of this type of material in



society, children and teenagers are getting most of their sex education from porn. It is no surprise, therefore, that sexual bullying in schools is on the increase.

Pornography is harmful to women and to society at large and undermines UNISON's efforts to campaign for the eradication of sexism and sex discrimination.

## **Online Safety**

Social media in our society is widely used and has proven to be very beneficial both in a work or a personal context. However there is a growing concern about our rights to privacy when using these sites such as members posting where they work on their public profiles and the impact on their job, especially if dealing with vulnerable individuals. There has also been an increase in social media references within disciplinarys in the workplace, and more employers take social media profiles into account when recruiting.

Many women are unaware of the risks they could put themselves at when updating these sites. Profiles could provide enough information for someone to become a potential victim of stalking or fraud.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Contact the Minister for Women and seek commitments to further women's equality as well as upholding and protecting the gains that have been made.

- Encourage women to become involved in public life such as working with Labour Link, or taking up public duties such as becoming school governors or local councillors.
- Encourage discussion of the issues about occupational segregation and gender stereotyping in the workplace.
- Promote the recommendations of the CEDAW report and campaign for the implementation of the observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
- Urge the government to fulfil the recommendations of the Corston Report and support the work of Women in Prison to raise awareness of the need for more community focused, non-custodial sentences for women affected by the criminal justice system.
- Raise awareness of UNISON's views that full decriminalisation of the sex industry and its profiteers is an infringement on women's rights and support the 'End Demand' campaign to implement a Sex Buyer law.
- Actively promote UNISON's policy and opposition to pornography and work with other campaigning groups to raise awareness of the harms of living in a pornified culture.
- Lobby MPs and parliamentary groups for improved media regulation and protections from the harms of pornography.
- Write to newsagents or other shops to request that they classify lads' mags as soft porn rather than as lifestyle magazines, and request that they do

not display them close to children's literature.

- Lobby employers to ensure that publications available within public buildings, such as libraries and hospitals do not include material portraying a sexualised depiction of women.
- Highlight online safety and dos and don'ts for women around social media sites, and encourage branch activists to negotiate social media policies within workplaces.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## **More information**



- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)



The UK's leading charity for women's equality and rights at home, at work and in public life.

The Fawcett Society  
Studio 204, The Print Rooms  
164-180 Union Street  
London SE1 0LH  
Tel: 0203 598 6154  
Email: [info@fawcettsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@fawcettsociety.org.uk)  
[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)



The leading national umbrella body for women's charities, with over 500 members.

Women's Resource Centre  
United House  
North Road  
London N7 9DP  
Tel: 020 7697 3450  
Email: [admin@wrc.org.uk](mailto:admin@wrc.org.uk)  
[www.wrc.org.uk](http://www.wrc.org.uk)

## **COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

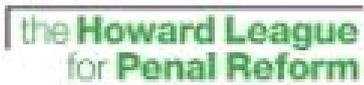
The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

[www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx)



A charity that supports women to avoid, survive and exit the criminal justice system and campaign for the radical changes needed to deliver justice for women.

Women in Prison  
Unit 10, the Ivories  
6 Northampton Street  
London  
N1 2HY  
Tel: 020 7359 6674  
[www.womeninprison.org.uk](http://www.womeninprison.org.uk)



A national charity working for less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison.

The Howard League for Penal Reform  
1 Ardleigh Road  
London, N1 4HS  
Tel: 020 7249 7373  
Email: [info@howardleague.org](mailto:info@howardleague.org)  
[www.howardleague.org](http://www.howardleague.org)



Supporting people to campaign for a world where women and men are equal. They believe that political, economic and social equality between women and men is possible – and it is a world that will be better for all.

Email: [info@ukfeminista.org.uk](mailto:info@ukfeminista.org.uk)  
<http://ukfeminista.org.uk/>



Existing to catalogue instances of sexism experienced by women on a day-to-day basis.

<http://everydaysexism.com/>

## END DEMAND for sexual exploitation

A campaign calling on the UK government to end demand for sex trafficking and exploitation through prostitution by adopting the Sex Buyer Law.

Email: [contact@enddemand.uk](mailto:contact@enddemand.uk)  
[www.enddemand.uk](http://www.enddemand.uk)



Campaigning to protect children from sexualisation and commercialization.

Email: [info@childeyes.org](mailto:info@childeyes.org)  
[www.childseyeline.org](http://www.childseyeline.org)

# Women's role in the union

Women are the foundation on which UNISON is built. There are many inspiring women in our union structures, many of whom hold senior roles. The marches and the rallies that we have organised through UNISON and the TUC have seen thousands of our women members take to the streets to show that as public sector workers and citizens, we will fight a government that wants to erode the quality of life for women and our families, and diminish our opportunities to achieve our potential.

We need to nurture new women members to come forward as activists and as leaders. Recruiting new members, improving density and increasing the women's activist base have never been more important.

Trade unions play a vital role in improving the employment conditions of women and advancing workplace gender equality. Women in all countries are the largest group of marginalised citizens and workers. We also know that the workplace offers a unique opportunity to improve women's lives and opportunities. Belonging to a trade union increases women's ability to challenge their inequality of opportunity; ending discrimination at work is an essential step in making that a reality.

We need to look at how we recruit stewards that truly reflect the makeup of our membership. We must find different

ways to approach members and potential members, to get the message out to show them that they are not isolated and that we are still stronger together. We must highlight the benefits of being involved and how women's voices must be heard loud and clear.

## Learning opportunities

UNISON has a comprehensive education system nationally and regionally that covers courses from improving English and maths to leadership and mentoring, and there is an educational grant scheme



to help towards fees or course costs.

Often women members need to be particularly encouraged to take on positions of leadership within UNISON, and to attend leadership and other courses, including lobbying skills, use of local media, public speaking and assertiveness skills, as well as IT and social networking skills which can be useful for campaigning activities.

## **Mentoring and buddying**

Experienced women need to be mentoring and buddying new women to come through whether that is at branch, regional or national level. It is our responsibility to pass on our knowledge to others.

Buddying and mentoring are valuable ways of nurturing new women activists without 'throwing them in at the deep end' of trade union activity. It helps to allay fears about what is expected and helps women gain an understanding of various trade union roles before taking them on. By mentoring, women can be guided through trade union processes which can at first appear daunting. It is also an opportunity for those with experience at local, regional and national levels to pass on their experience and knowledge to new activists and act (in a voluntary capacity) as an aide towards the

organising approach promoted by UNISON.

## **Equality reps**

TUC research published in 2010 found that less than half of equality reps surveyed were women (46%) but that this was unsurprising due to the lack of equality facility time. The research also reported that equality reps greatly enhance employers' equality work and have a positive impact in the workplace.

The activities that equality reps undertook included:

- providing advice and information on equality matters
- encouraging and supporting workplace diversity and fairness
- workplace mapping and tackling discriminatory patterns
- assisting with flexible working





- supporting and advising members on sexual harassment issues
- encouraging discussion of sex equality issues on the collective bargaining agenda.

But the lack of equality facility time seriously impairs women activists' abilities to challenge discrimination against women in the workplace: it is becoming a second class matter left for better days.

## Proportionality

UNISON has a proud record on working towards equality both in its internal structures and in its bargaining and campaigning agenda. One of the key strategies for UNISON to achieve equality of representation and engagement within UNISON has been proportionality.

Proportionality is defined as “the representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate”.

But much work is still to be done on achieving and maintaining proportionality, particularly to ensure the active involvement of low paid women. For example it is clear from the data from the South East Regional Equality Action Team research and recent research undertaken by a South East branch secretary as part of MA studies at Ruskin, that at a local level, in branches, women are still under represented and sometime by a significant number. And the South East is unlikely to be alone with new initiatives needed to address the problem and strategies developed to assist branches in achieving proportionality and fair representation.

## Young women

It is essential that we devise ways to attract more young women into our movement, and ensure that our agenda is one in which their aspirations are met, and that our organisation is one in which they can reach their full potential as UNISON members.

Young people engaging with other young people has proven to be very effective. For example in the Northern region a General Fighting Fund post held by a young woman, focussed on working with young people, and recruited hundreds of new members. In addition to this there is a very active young members group that has run a number of successful campaigns.

Numbers of young women attending women's conference also continue to be low and this needs to be addressed by branches, alongside improving young members' participation in the women's self-organised groups at all levels of the union.

## **Low paid and part-time women**

Women are often amongst the lowest paid and in the past twenty years the proportion of young women in low-paid roles has trebled. Many of the roles low-paid women workers undertake include working unsociable hours, which may prevent them from attending meetings.

Ensuring members know of the benefits of being in UNISON is the key to increasing participation. Often there are barriers to participation such as finance, childcare, respite care, education and resources, and these need to be properly identified and addressed.

## **Black women**

A high percentage of Black women members can be seen working in health, social care and local government, many



as low paid members. At a time when division is often being promoted in our communities, it is crucial that UNISON continues to lead the way in showing that diversity in our society adds value to us. Recent Freedom of Information requests carried out on behalf of North West Region and the wider union found that in many of our local authorities, Black women, whilst poorly reflected in number within the workforce (5% rather than 12% statistical expectation) are more likely to be selected for redundancy than their white counterparts.

Even though all Black women members are automatically part of their branch's women's self organised groups, the progression for Black women to regional women's SOGs is sometimes difficult because of the different ways regional women's SOGs are organised.



Branches should encourage and enable Black women members to attend the regional women's group on their behalf to help ensure that the union's structure is fully inclusive and truly reflects the diversity of women's self-organisation.

## **Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) women**

Inclusive language is important in ensuring that all LGBT women within the women's movement and UNISON women's self organisation feel welcome and valued. Language, and our understanding of language is constantly evolving and we should always be mindful of this. It can often be easy to continue to use words and phrases without fully considering the effect that these may have on already marginalised groups of women within women's self-organisation.

For example, some people use the word 'straight' as if it is an opposite to 'LGBT', which amongst other issues, ignores the fact that many trans women are straight.

Sometimes our language silences the voices of people who identify as non-binary – that is, people who do not identify as either male or female, or who identify as both male and female.

Quite often bisexual women face biphobia not only from heterosexuals, but from the LGBT community as well. They face allegations of sitting on the fence and of not making their minds up, or of being promiscuous. It is important that the experiences of bisexual women are considered in workplace negotiations and equality proofing, and that UNISON is active in educating members and removing myths and stereotypes surrounding bisexuality.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Celebrate and promote the achievements of inspiring women within the union.

- Seek out and promote positive role models for Black women, disabled women, LGBT women, young women and low-paid women, especially those who contribute to delivery of public services, who have made a positive difference in their workplace, union or community and who contribute to political life.
- Where branches have good practice in recruitment and organising of women, seek to share these with other branches, and campaign to ensure that appropriate funding is available to support women's self-organisation.
- Identify areas where predominantly women work (such as home care, school meals, teaching assistants etc) and focus on campaigning over issues such as low pay, poor conditions, zero hours contracts, term-time only work etc that particularly affect women workers.
- Reach women through community-based activities such as getting existing women members to staff stalls at community events.
- Encourage wider use of social media, the UNISON conference app and Organising Space by women, and ensure members keep their membership and contact data up to date.
- Encourage women to participate in self-organised groups, young members organisation and to attend national women's conference, and ensure that your branch structure is easy to access, including using social media and publicity relevant to young women, Black women and LGBT women, reviewing language used to ensure it is inclusive.
- Research the barriers that stop low-paid women from participating and campaign for branches to provide expenses in advance where possible.
- Encourage branches to support cross-sector geographical women's meetings.
- Raise the issue with regions and branches about the need to actively work towards proportionality.
- Collaborate with student unions, nursing and technical colleges etc. to raise awareness of the benefits of union membership and to recruit eligible students into membership at the end of their period of study (such as running recruitment and information stands at student events).
- Encourage the use of workplace learning to recognise and improve women's abilities and opportunities, highlighting the benefits that UNISON training can offer our female members.
- Promote and participate in the mentoring and buddying schemes across UNISON.
- Encourage branches to promote and support women's training including Women into Leadership training and buddying and mentoring training courses.
- Make sure that bisexuality is included within the diversity implications section of every document and policy, promote UNISON's factsheets on LGBT workers and the annual UNISON network meeting for bisexual members, held each July and Bisexual Visibility Day held each September 23.

- Campaign for the right of our women activists for facility time to perform their trade union duties.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## **More information**



- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)
- **Resources for Black members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/Blackmembers](http://www.unison.org.uk/Blackmembers)
- **Resources for disabled members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/disabledmembers](http://www.unison.org.uk/disabledmembers)
- **Resources for LGBT members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/out](http://www.unison.org.uk/out)
- **Resources for young members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/youngmembers](http://www.unison.org.uk/youngmembers)
- **Learning for you**  
UNISON's learning and organising services (LAOS) co-ordinates trade union education and lifelong learning opportunities for members. This includes training and development for union reps as well as personal and career development courses ranging from Skills for Life through to professional qualifications.  
[www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/learning-development](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/learning-development)
- **Support for learning**

[www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/learning-development/financial-support](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/learning-development/financial-support)

- **Get active in your workplace**

With information on helping your branch, becoming a rep or steward, mentoring or buddying new activists, as well as resources for activists

[www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/in-your-workplace/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/in-your-workplace/)



Founded in 1903, the WEA (Workers' Educational Association) is a charity and the UK's largest voluntary sector provider of adult education, delivering 9,700 part-time courses for over 70,000 people each year in England and Scotland.

For contact details for regional offices:  
[www.wea.org.uk/local](http://www.wea.org.uk/local)



WEA Cymru provides community education, including community development and on-line learning in communities and workplace education.  
[www.weacymru.org.uk](http://www.weacymru.org.uk)



Unionlearn is the learning and skills organisation of the TUC. It works to assist unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members as well as managing the Union Learning Fund (ULF).  
[www.unionlearn.org.uk](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk)

# Women and politics

Even with a new female Tory prime minister, across the UK women remain massively underrepresented in the political and decision making process including at a local level, that influence our lives, especially working class women.

The Fawcett Society has argued that there has been little improvement in the level of women councillors in the last ten years, with the number dropping in Scotland and Wales.

Local authorities have a huge amount of power and provide many of the services women rely on. With more and more powers promised via devolution, women are missing out on influencing decisions.

There are many hurdles women face when standing for local election such as trying to combine work, caring responsibilities with running a campaign. Women councillors are often pigeon-holed into traditionally female portfolios such as Children's or Adult social care and are rarely in the cabinet where spending decisions are made if meetings are held at awkward times.

Council meetings should be run to allow engagement of all its councillors including people with caring responsibilities and/or jobs to attend.

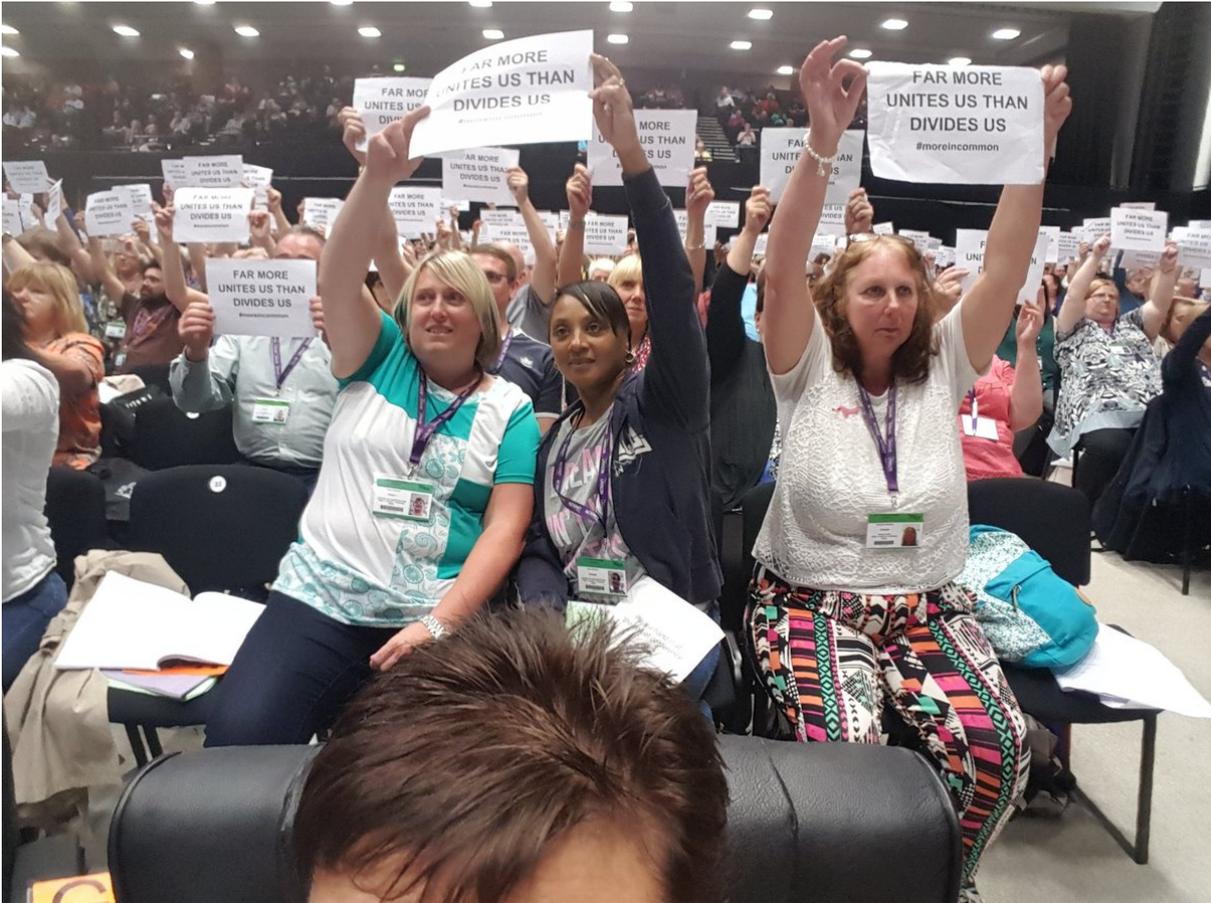
## **Women's vote**

Statistics show that many women do not use their vote and do not feel that casting their vote is important, often because they do not believe it will change anything.

However the turn out in the Scottish independence vote and EU referendum demonstrates that voter apathy can be overcome, and it is therefore essential that we continue to campaign to ensure that women vote to protect what's left of our public services in the next election.

Local and general elections provide a real opportunity for women to show the government how they feel about the attack on their jobs, services and pensions by placing their vote and making a difference. While many women may think they don't 'do' politics, they do care about issues that are political – education, crime, the environment, health care and safer neighbourhoods.

But as discontent at austerity and falling living standards grow, and in the aftermath of the EU referendum result, we are also witnessing increased hate crime and concerted attempts to create divisions among British society for example by scapegoating migrant workers and Muslims. The small minority of Muslim women who wear the niqab are particularly being targeted as part of a



wider attempt to stoke up racism and Islamophobia.

With the upsurge of the BNP and other far-right groups such as the English Defence League in our communities, it is more important than ever that women exercise their right to vote. The BNP's attitudes to Black workers, migrant workers and asylum seekers are well known. Less well known is their attitude towards women. The BNP believes that hard-won rights for women discriminate against men.

### ***Campaign ideas***

- Working within Labour Link, regions and branches, encourage and support UNISON women to participate in the political processes and to stand for

election at all levels of the political spectrum.

- Support 50:50 cabinet structure within local and national government and promote the 50:50 Parliament campaign.
- Produce and distribute information on encouraging women to register to vote including postal voting, and how they can use their votes to influence change.
- Work with young members groups to turn out the young women's vote.
- Encourage members to become individual members of anti-fascist organisations such as Hope Not Hate.
- Work with other self-organised groups on joint campaigning work against the BNP and the far-right.

- Raise awareness of the implications of voting for the Conservatives and UKIP and the threat they both pose to women and to workers rights, public services and our society.
- Actively support Labour women candidates who are trade unionists and who support UNISON's values, and encourage members to get involved in local constituency Labour Party groups to assist with canvassing and campaigning work on behalf of candidates who support UNISON's aims.
- Provide opportunities for political education and engaging with international solidarity campaigns within women's self organisation groups.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

### **More information**



- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)



The UK's leading charity for women's equality and rights at home, at work and in public life.

The Fawcett Society  
 Studio 204, The Print Rooms

164-180 Union Street  
 London SE1 0LH  
 Tel: 0203 598 6154  
 Email: [info@fawcettsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@fawcettsociety.org.uk)  
[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)



A Cross-Party Campaign and Petition. Their vision is a parliament where men & women legislate the laws of our land, together, in roughly equal numbers.  
[www.5050parliament.co.uk](http://www.5050parliament.co.uk)



The campaign for 50% representation in the Scottish Parliament, councils and on public boards.  
[www.women5050.org](http://www.women5050.org)



Existing to provide a positive antidote to the politics of hate. They combine first class research with community organising & grassroots actions to defeat hate groups at elections and to build community resilience against extremism.

HOPE not hate  
 PO Box 1084  
 Wembley HA9 1HT  
 Telephone: 020 7952 1181  
[www.hopenothate.org.uk](http://www.hopenothate.org.uk)



Supporting victims of anti-Muslim hate and is a public service which also measures and monitors anti-Muslim incidents.

<http://tellmamauk.org/>



Working and campaigning in support of migrants in the UK. Their work brings together migrant activists and support organisations, think tanks, academics, faith groups and public sector representatives to advocate for a rights-based approach towards migration in the UK.

Migrants' Rights Network  
33 Corsham Street  
London N1 6DR  
Email: [info@migrantsrights.org.uk](mailto:info@migrantsrights.org.uk)  
[www.migrantsrights.org.uk](http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk)



Existing to secure the election of more Labour women to public office at every level and to support Labour women to play a full part in the Party.

Email: [contact@lwn.org.uk](mailto:contact@lwn.org.uk)

[www.lwn.org.uk](http://www.lwn.org.uk)



The women's section of the Fabian Society with priorities to support, promote and connect women with Labour politicians and leading women in the public sphere.

[www.fabianwomen.co.uk](http://www.fabianwomen.co.uk)

# Women as parents and carers

## **Pregnancy, maternity and parental rights**

In this time of austerity measures, maternity, adoption, surrogacy and parental provisions are often being targeted by employers seeking to make savings in their budgets, particularly for those members working in the community and voluntary sector.

Pregnancy discrimination already affects tens of thousands of women each year and the problem is ongoing as shown by the 2015 research published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. For example, it was found that one in nine mothers were dismissed or unfairly made compulsorily redundant, others experienced harassment relating to pregnancy or were discouraged from attending ante natal appointments.

But the introduction of employment tribunal fees has reduced in particular low paid workers' access to justice to challenge maternity discrimination.

Moreover, women returning from maternity leave find that flexible working requests are increasingly refused without proper consideration of the feasibility of part-time working or job-shares. In many cases little provision is made for a re-introduction to work which

can make returning to work difficult and in some cases traumatic, especially for mothers dealing with health problems including postnatal depression.

Pregnant women and those on or returning from maternity leave are often unable to compete with colleagues when restructures occur. Many women take a part-time position when they return from maternity leave, not always because they want to spend more time with their children but often because of the financial burden of costly childcare and the inflexible approach of employers.

## **Rights of intended parents through surrogacy**

In addition to this, women entering into surrogacy or adoption arrangements, or those undergoing assisted conception treatment, particularly LGBT women, also experience discrimination and unfavourable treatment in the workplace.

Despite surrogacy being legal in the United Kingdom, the intended parents have few legal rights unless they happen to be male. An intended father can gain shared parental responsibility as soon as the child is born by registering the child in his name, naming him as the father on the birth certificate or by immediate application for a parental responsibility agreement.



An intended mother however has to wait six weeks before they can apply to the courts for a parental order to give them full and permanent parental rights over the child. This can be a very lengthy process.

An intended parent who has applied or intends to apply for a parental order and expects to be granted it by the courts now has the right to adoption leave and pay, not least as a result of UNISON campaigning.

But intended mothers should have rights on a par with maternity rather than adoptive rights, which would also allow for time off for pre-natal appointments and the birth of the child.

## Childcare

Meanwhile the lack of affordable childcare remains one of the key issues for women members, if they are to be effectively enabled to have access to full working lives.

In the UK approximately 5.5 million working mothers of dependent children pay for childcare. With increasing costs of childcare, other household bills and stagnant or reducing salaries, women are finding it harder and harder to stay in work.

For parents of disabled children, the problems are exacerbated. Finding carers with suitable skills and experience, and potentially until the child is older than a non-disabled child, creates further barriers to employment and greater hardship for the family.

The cost of childcare is closely linked to the economic viability of working women and those seeking employment. The reality for many women members is that their choices are limited, and for too many they feel they have no choice or options. Increased government support for working parents is needed as well as better provision by employers.



## Breastfeeding

UNISON supports a woman's right to decide whether she breastfeeds, and believes that the choice should be a genuine one, with support available for breastfeeding at work or outside the home.

The Department of Health recommends that babies are exclusively breastfed for six months. UNISON believes that women must be comfortable breastfeeding in public, and that suitable facilities should be available to enable this. The taboo on women breastfeeding in public is an example of the sexualisation of women's bodies: breasts can only be regarded as objects that arouse rather than in their natural function of feeding a baby.

**Breastfeeding at work:** It is important that if a mother chooses to breastfeed,

she is encouraged and supported to continue breastfeeding after she returns to work.

Employers must be aware of their responsibility to ensure that women returning to work after maternity leave who are breastfeeding should be given adequate breaks to rest and express milk and have a proper workplace risk assessment, taking the fact they are breastfeeding into account.

A major campaign issue for advocates of breastfeeding is the tactics that baby food companies use to encourage women to use their products. Often it can be argued that this advertising goes against the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. Promotion of infant formula in the general media or in shops is against UK law.

In addition, the use of controversial chemical, Bisphenol-A (commonly abbreviated to BPA) in baby bottles is still available in the UK, despite clear scientific evidence linking even low level exposure to increased risk of breast cancer and other chronic conditions.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Lobby the government for further improvements in maternity and parental allowances and leave, as well as improved maternity services to support a safe and healthy pregnancy.
- Promote campaigns that seek to improve childcare provision and lower the costs of childcare, whilst protecting the terms and conditions of staff working in the childcare sector.
- Negotiate with employers for improvements to local terms and conditions, in excess of the statutory minimum.
- Raise awareness among members of the rights of all parents, and the threat to the existing provisions.
- Provide support to women returning to work after maternity leave and on negotiating policies on Keeping In Touch days.
- Negotiate with employers to exclude IVF and assisted fertility treatment from sickness absence procedures.
- Encourage Labour to support the legal right for both parents to have parental responsibility from birth in surrogacy arrangements and for maternity rights for the intended mother, and to make sure it is part of the legislative

programme of future Labour governments.

- Remind employers of their responsibilities to women who are breastfeeding when they return to work.
- Work with the coalition members of the Breastfeeding Manifesto to produce and distribute positive images as widely as possible and supply details of breastfeeding support groups, the benefits of breastfeeding, and the details of employers' responsibilities to women who are breastfeeding.
- Campaign to pressure the government to tackle the aggressive marketing techniques used by infant formula companies and to adopt the full International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes.
- Lobby the government asking them to support the campaign to end the use of BPA in all products intended to come into contact with our food and drinks.
- Continue to support UNISON's campaign to end employment tribunal fees in the interest of all women members.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## More information



- **Resources for women members**

[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

- **Leave information including maternity, paternity and parental leave**

[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/leave/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/leave/)

- **Pay information including maternity, paternity and adoption pay**

[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/pay/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/pay/)



The voice of Britain at work. With 51 affiliated unions representing nearly 6 million working people from all walks of life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

The Trade Union Congress  
Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3LS  
Tel: 020 7636 4030  
[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- **Pregnancy discrimination**

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/pregnancy-discrimination](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/pregnancy-discrimination)



The UK's leading charity committed to ending inequality and improving the health and well-being of pregnant women, partners and young children – from conception through to the child's early years.

Maternity Action  
52-54 Featherstone Street  
London EC1Y 8RT  
Tel: 020 7253 2288  
Email: [info@maternityaction.org.uk](mailto:info@maternityaction.org.uk)  
[www.maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.maternityaction.org.uk)



The UK's leading work-life balance organisation. The charity helps working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work.  
[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

Working Families  
Cambridge House  
1 Addington Square  
London SE5 0HF  
Tel: 020 7253 7243  
Legal advice for parents & carers: 0300 012 0312  
or [advice@workingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@workingfamilies.org.uk)

Working Families (Scotland) / Family Friendly Working Scotland  
Robertson House  
152 Bath Street  
Glasgow G2 4TB  
0141 353 5627

# Gingerbread

Single parents, equal families

The leading charity working with single parent families. Supporting, advising and campaigning with single mums and dads to help them meet their family's needs.

Gingerbread  
520 Highgate Studios  
53-79 Highgate Road  
London NW5 1TL  
Tel: 020 7428 5420  
Wales office: 02920 471900  
Single parents' helpline: 0808 802 0925  
[www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)



Providing help to all single parent families in Scotland; mums, dads, young parents and kinship carers.

One Parent Families Scotland  
13 Gayfield Square  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3NX  
Helpline: 0808 801 0323  
Helpline Email: [helpline@opfs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@opfs.org.uk)  
Tel: 0131 556 3899  
Email: [info@opfs.org.uk](mailto:info@opfs.org.uk)  
[www.opfs.org.uk](http://www.opfs.org.uk)



The leading national charity working to end poverty among children, young people and families in the UK.

[www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk)

Child Poverty Action Group  
30 Micawber Street  
London  
N1 7TB  
Tel: 020 7837 7979  
Email: [info@cpag.org.uk](mailto:info@cpag.org.uk)

CPAG in Scotland  
Unit 9, Ladywell  
94 Duke Street  
Glasgow G4 0UW  
Tel: 0141 552 3303  
Email: [staff@cpagscotland.org.uk](mailto:staff@cpagscotland.org.uk)



An organisation set up to celebrate, champion and campaign for our Children's Centres. Their aims are to publicise the great work of Sure Start, to campaign against the Government's cuts to it – and to generate new ideas for the future.  
Email: [laboursurestart@gmail.com](mailto:laboursurestart@gmail.com)  
<http://laboursurestart.com/>



As part of a global network called IBFAN (the International Baby Food Action Network), this campaign group acts to stop misleading marketing by the baby feeding industry. They aim to protect breastfeeding and babies fed on formula to prevent unnecessary death and suffering.

Baby Milk Action  
34 Trumpington Street  
Cambridge CB2 1QY  
Tel: 01223 464420  
[www.babymilkaction.org](http://www.babymilkaction.org)



Breast Cancer UK is calling for a ban on the use of BPA in food and drinks packaging on the basis that studies show that low dose exposures to BPA have been shown to have an adverse effect on the mammary gland.

[www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/our-campaigns/no-more-bpa/](http://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/our-campaigns/no-more-bpa/)  
[www.nomorebpa.org.uk](http://www.nomorebpa.org.uk)

# Ending violence against women

Violence against women is a major campaigning issue for UNISON. We campaign to increase the rate of reporting it as a crime, and to improve the criminal justice system so that more perpetrators are punished.

Under international human rights obligations, including recommendations under CEDAW and the European Convention on Human Rights (Articles 2,3,8), states have a responsibility to act with due diligence, that is with due care and effort, to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all women within their jurisdiction. But continuing cuts to services, and changes to the legal aid criteria, mean that the government is failing to fulfil those obligations.

## Domestic abuse

As the Home Office has stated in their report on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking (findings from the British Crime Survey) “women are the overwhelming majority of the most heavily abused group. Among people subject to four or more incidents of domestic violence from the perpetrator of the worst incident (since age 16), 89 per cent were women.”

One in four women will be victims of domestic violence in their life time, with women being at great risk of repeat victimisation and serious injury. Two women are killed every week in England

and Wales by a current or former partner . One incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute. But domestic violence remains chronically under reported.

Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society.

UNISON recognises that men and boys can also be the victims of violence and that there has been a rise in domestic abuse in same sex relationships. UNISON's national LGBT Conference in 2013 noted that 37% of same sex relationships have featured non-consensual violence.

UNISON is opposed to all violence, whatever the gender or age of the perpetrator or victim. But in a sexist society, male violence against women plays a particular role in limiting the participation of women in all areas of civil life, including trade union activity. As the UN General Secretary stated in 2006, “Violence against women is not the result of random, individual acts of misconduct, but rather is deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men”.

Women continue to order their day and lives around the restrictions to safety and



**UNISON**  
the public service union

**We won't look the other way**

**Domestic abuse takes many forms – physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and financial and it affects victims in the workplace and beyond. That's why it's an issue for everyone including UNISON.**

**We are here to help and support our members.**

- We provide emergency assistance, including financial aid if necessary, through our charity There For You.
- We negotiate workplace policies to support and assist staff experiencing domestic abuse.

Anyone can be a victim, regardless of gender, age, culture, ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation and anyone can be a perpetrator - partners, spouses, parents, children or carers.

**So if you need our help go to [unison.org.uk/get-help](http://unison.org.uk/get-help) or call our trained advisors on 0207 121 5620 (Monday to Friday).**

You can also call UNISON on 0800 0 857 857 (text phone 0800 0 967 968). Lines are open 6am-midnight, Monday to Friday, and 9am-4pm on Saturdays or email [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk)

Your branch may also be able to help. You can contact them directly or through UNISONdirect – details above.

**UNISON – we won't look the other way**

where violence against women is commonplace and acceptable.

Domestic abuse cases now account for 14.1% of all court prosecutions, and the volume of prosecutions rose last year to the highest level ever of 92,779. 92.4% of defendants were male and 7.6% were women. 84% of victims were female and 16% were male. (Statistics from the CPS VAWG report 2014/15).

However, it is still the case that women report that when they have been a victim, they are not believed. They may face allegations that they inflicted the injuries on themselves and/or

freedom of movement which the background threat of men's violence imposes, sometimes without them even realising it. Not going out alone after dark, or holding your keys in your hands whilst walking home in case you are attacked, are sadly done because of a fear of violence from men.

Despite significant social changes men continue to grow up within a deeply misogynistic male dominated culture

inappropriate questioning of their mental health status, alcohol consumption and sexual history.

The fear of stigma and the fear of not being believed prevents many women from reporting violence and abuse.

If any incident or allegation is raised within UNISON or within a workplace there must, of course, be a fair and impartial investigation that protects the rights of all parties, and our branches manage this on a daily basis. For example, in a situation

where a member has put in an allegation against another member, each member has a representative who is there to protect their individual interests and to support them, but any investigation resulting from their allegations is independent, fair and impartial.

Likewise, if legal advice were sought in a situation where both a complainant and the person complained of sought UNISON's assistance, the same test would be applied to both parties in that there would be separate legal evaluation of the complaint and the defence, and separate representation for both parties, where this was judged appropriate within UNISON's legal guidelines.

But it is essential that anyone reporting abuse is confident that reporting such an incident would be taken seriously, and that all women who complain of male violence, both in and outside of the trade union movement, have the right to be listened to, their allegations taken seriously and properly investigated with appropriate action being taken if proven.

For women in an abusive relationship, the workplace can be an important protective factor. It offers time away from the abuser, space for women to be themselves and valued for their skills and abilities, a source of income that provides some autonomy and independence and communication with work colleagues that reduces isolation. It should also be able to provide support to make a disclosure and seek help, but, as a TUC survey showed, too often women suffer in silence – too afraid, or perhaps too ashamed to tell their employer.

But women are more likely to turn to a trusted union rep, and with violence at home undoubtedly impacting on job performance, it is important that victims/survivors have a union on their side.

## **The definition of domestic violence and abuse**

In 2013, the government agreed a core definition:

**“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.**

**This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:**

- **psychological**
- **physical**
- **sexual**
- **financial**
- **emotional.**

**Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.**

**Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.”**

The Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new offence of **controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships** (section 76). The offence carries a maximum sentence of 5 years’ imprisonment, a fine or both. Such behaviour takes place “repeatedly or continuously”, the victim and alleged perpetrator must be “personally connected” at the time the behaviour takes place and the behaviour must have had a “serious effect” on the victim, meaning that it has caused the victim to fear violence will be used against them on “at least two occasions”, or it has had a “substantial adverse effect on the victims’

day to day activities”.

Coercive control is a term that was developed by the academic Evan Stark to describe a form of partner abuse that survivors report as being akin to a form of domestic or intimate terrorism. Coercive control explains the range of tactics used by perpetrators to intimidate and control women. In Stark’s own phrase, the concept explains “how men entrap women in everyday life”.

“It is a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victim’s liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self. It is not just women’s bodily integrity which is violated but also their human rights.”

However recent statistics have shown that about 85% of victims sought help on average five times from professionals in the year before they got effective help to

Why is domestic violence an issue **in the workplace?**

Domestic violence is a prevalent crime. Many workplaces employ someone who has experienced it directly or indirectly. Domestic violence is now more widely understood, and employers and trade unions realise that it can also have a damaging affect on business and on employee morale. The effects of domestic violence can impact on punctuality, attendance, health and safety, work performance and productivity, as well as job prospects or career development.



stop the abuse. On average victims experience fifty incidents of abuse before getting effective help.

UNISON remains concerned that the police and other criminal justice agencies continue to fail women who report these crimes to them.

Cuts in public spending are also having a detrimental impact on services that are reliant on funding such as women's refuges. Violence against women services are essential for women to access safety, justice and to rebuild their lives.

Authorities are increasingly adopting a 'one size fits all' approach, denying the need for specialist services for Black women, disabled women, LGBT women or older women.

## **Older women**

A pattern of behaviour of coercive control is especially relevant to many older/elderly women. Some older women have been subjected to a form of control previously tacitly accepted by society whereby men were permitted, even encouraged, to 'control' their wives. In such a scenario women may well have internalised this approach and even perceived it as 'normal' for married couples.

It is often assumed that domestic violence is mainly experienced by younger women, and that older women's experiences can be put under the category of 'elder abuse'. Older women may experience even more barriers to disclosure than younger women, and may therefore be more reluctant to report violence.

As a result, despite women over the age of 45 making up 22% of the national population, they are known to be a group who under-report sexual and domestic violence and abuse.

Older women may experience more barriers to disclosure than younger women, and may therefore be more reluctant to report violence. These barriers include:

- Stigma and shame
- Fear of consequences such as financial insecurity and leaving a lifetime home environment
- Older women may not see their experiences as relevant
- Lack of understanding about what constitutes abuse
- Physical frailty or disability
- Older women's experiences of violence may be historic and therefore they may have forgotten the incidents, or see them as no longer relevant
- Isolation
- Confusion, disassociation, prolonged trauma
- Cultural issues.

## **Disabled women**

More than 50% of disabled women in the UK may have experienced domestic abuse in their lives, and statistics show that disabled women may be assaulted or raped at a rate that is at least twice that of non-disabled women. Domestic abuse can mean that medication, food and/or money are withheld by the abusive partner and/or carer, which can make it even harder for disabled women to get out of controlling relationships.

Research has also shown that people with severe mental illness experience a substantially increased risk of domestic and sexual violence, as well as higher prevalence of family violence and adverse health impacts following victimisation.

## Stalking

The British Crime Survey (2006) estimated that five million people experience stalking each year, although there are no official statistics on the percentage cyberstalked. Statistics from the National Stalking Helpline show that

the vast majority of victims are female while the majority of perpetrators are male.

However victims do not tend to report to the police until the 100<sup>th</sup> incident. When it is reported there is a lack of understanding, and low priority is often given to cases by the criminal justice system. In many situations the pattern of stalking is missed and effective risk assessment, management and a co-ordinated response is lacking, putting women's lives at risk.

As a result of a stalking law reform campaign, two new offences of stalking have been enacted, but women are still not being adequately supported, nor are cases being taken seriously, despite high profile media cases of women who have been stalked and murdered, and failures being identified in the way their cases were handled.

## Rape

Rape culture is endemic in the UK. Statistics collected for England and Wales alone show that nearly half a million adults are sexually assaulted in England and Wales each year. One in five women aged 16-59 has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16. But only around 15% of those who experience sexual violence choose to report to the police.

Rape victims in court are still routinely interrogated about their sexual history, what they were wearing and how much they had had to drink when they were raped. Rape is always the responsibility of the perpetrator, never the victim.

**WHAT STALKERS DO**

TURNING UP UNANNOUNCED STALKER DANGEROUS DRIVING  
VICTIM INTERNET UNWANTED INTERNET CONTACT SPYING  
OFFLINE PREVENTION HARASSMENT  
SPYING ON-LINE  
PHONES DIGITAL STALKING  
SOCIAL NETWORK STALKING  
VIOLENCE INTERVENTION SEXUAL VIOLENCE  
CONTACTING VIA A THIRD PARTY  
HACKING INTO ACCOUNTS  
HARASSMENT

**If you think you are a victim of stalking contact**

paladin  
National Stalking Advocacy Service

**0207 840 8960**  
**info@paladinservice.co.uk**

# Drinking is not a crime. Rape is.



No matter how much she's drunk...  
No matter what she's wearing...  
No matter if you've already kissed...  
... sex without consent is rape.

If there's any doubt about whether a woman has drunk too much to give consent, assume she hasn't given it.

Responsibility for rape will always lie with the rapist.

Find your local Rape Crisis Centre at [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)  
or call Rape Crisis freephone helpline 0808 802 9999

(12n-2.30pm / 7-9.30pm every day)

**RAPECRISIS**  
ENGLAND AND WALES

Contrary to popular myth, the majority of those (approximately 90%) who are raped know the perpetrator prior to the offence. Rape conviction rates vary between different police forces across the country. For every rape reported, many more are not reported.

Many local authorities have no specialised support services to help the victims of rape. The number of Rape Crisis centres has fallen, although the demand for their services is huge and growing, and there

are increasing waiting lists to access the services provided.

Rape Crisis member organisations across England and Wales responded to 171,000 helpline calls in the 12 months to 31st March 2016, an average of over 3,000 a week. 58,000 individuals received an on-going Rape Crisis service(s), an increase of 16% since 2014-15. 95 per cent of all service users were female.

## Forced marriages

Domestic abuse affects women from all ethnic groups although the form the abuse takes may vary. The particular issue of forced marriage and honour based violence places women, children and vulnerable adults at risk of rape, physical and mental harm and can end

in murder.

A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage where you have a choice as to whether to accept the arrangement or not. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and countries for a long time.

Forced marriages are where the individual (usually a woman) is coerced into

marrying someone against their will. Women and young girls who may be subjected to such a marriage need to be made aware of their rights and the help available to them to make informed choices.

In 2011 the Forced Marriage unit of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office gave advice and support to 1,468 people on this matter. They work with embassy staff across the world to rescue those who have been lured or forced abroad to be forcibly married.

Karma Nirvana's 'Honour Network', the first national helpline for victims of forced marriages and so called honour violence, regularly sees a spike in calls in the run up to the summer holidays, some are from girls saying they fear they will be married off abroad.

## Female Genital Mutilation

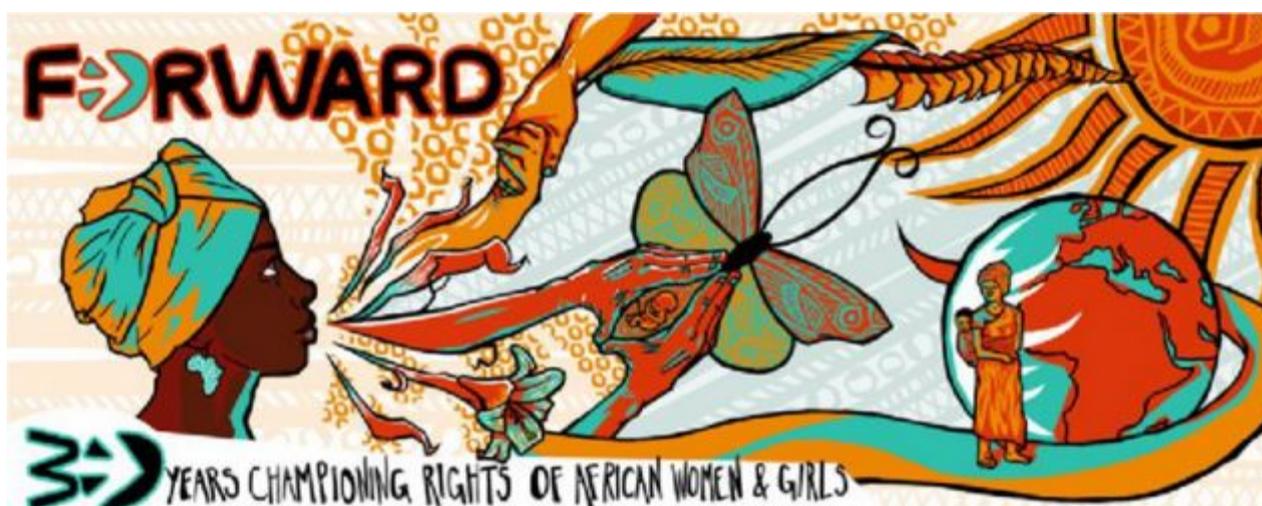
Female genital mutilation (FGM and sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the

female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice of female genital mutilation is widespread across the globe but in particular, FGM appears to be a central African cultural injunction rather than a faith based injunction.

Sometimes called infibulation, there are 4 types of this procedure. These range from cutting to burning away exposed genitalia. The procedure is usually carried out by women within the community. The belief is that FGM shows purity, cleanliness and good moral values, and will result in a successful marriage.

However the practice is clearly a violation of women's rights and children's rights and the impact on the health of these women and girls is immense. FGM puts their lives at risk and the lives of their unborn children, causing severe pain and bleeding, scarring, shock, infections, injury to nearby genital tissue, urinary, menstrual and childbirth problems and sometimes even death.

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced a 1985 Act, in England, Wales



and Northern Ireland, raising the maximum penalty from 5 to 14 years in prison. It also made it an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad even in countries where it is legal. The practice is illegal in the UK and it is also illegal to arrange for a child to be taken abroad for FGM.

Despite the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 it is estimated that 80,000 women and girls in the UK are at risk and that 66,000 women in the UK are living with the consequences of FGM. However, the true extent is unknown, due to the 'hidden' nature of the crime. The girls may be taken to their countries of origin so that FGM can be carried out during the summer holidays, allowing them time to 'heal' before they return to school. There are also worries that some girls may have FGM performed in the UK.

Over half of doctors in London have stated that they have treated women and young girls who have had this practice forced upon them.

## **Breast ironing**

Breast ironing is another form of mutilation practised in Cameroon, Togo and other African countries. It aims to deter unwanted male attention, pregnancy and rape by delaying the signs of a girl becoming a woman. The girls as young as 10 years old are having their chests pounded with hot objects including irons, pestles and hot stones constantly for as many as five months.

As well as being extremely painful it creates problems including abscesses,

cysts, infection, tissue damage and the disappearance of one or both breasts.

There is estimated to be some 3.8 million teenagers affected by this practise. British schools and teachers have been alerted about how to recognise this awful abuse of young girls and seek appropriate assistance. It is estimated that in the UK there are 66,000 women and girls who have undergone this act. The figure continues to rise.

## **Workplace domestic abuse policies**

For women to be able to remain in employment whilst experiencing domestic abuse, employers need to have robust domestic abuse policies in place. Union reps and managers need to be aware and trained in the use of such policies and should remain vigilant in implementing them.

For example, the importance of this is shown in research finding that 50% of victims have curtailed or stopped work due to stalking. 75% of domestic violence stalkers will turn up at the workplace and 79% of domestic violence stalker will use the work resources to target the victims.

Domestic abuse training should become statutory in public sector organisations such as the police, NHS, local government and social services. It is vital that members of staff can identify the different aspects of domestic abuse and the impact that it has on both women and children. This could then lead to women suffering from domestic abuse receiving an informed and proactive response such as being signposted to supportive

organisations, potentially both saving lives and supporting those women experiencing abuse.

The right to safety and justice is also often denied to employed women because of restrictions on access to legal aid, the discriminatory practice in the application of housing benefit and restrictions on access to much of the refuge accommodation.

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Raise awareness of the effects of domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence on women, and provide information for members at their branches on where to seek help if they become victims/survivors.
- Negotiate a workplace domestic abuse policy – a model policy is available from the UNISON guide ‘Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue’ (online catalogue [www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue) stock no 3477).
- Use the UNISON poster and leaflet, ‘We won’t look the other way’ (online catalogue [www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue) stock no 2539 and 3558) in your workplace and elsewhere to raise awareness of the issues and its effects across the entire female age spectrum.
- Offer training for activists to make them aware of domestic abuse policies in their workplace, and how these can be used to support members.
- Ensure that any policies negotiated with employers are sensitive to the particular needs and circumstances of women including Black women, disabled women, LGBT women and older women – particularly on issues such as coercive control, mental health, self-harm and suicide that are often related to violence and sexual abuse.
- Encourage employers to sign up to the Department of Health Responsibility Deal pledge for organisations wishing to support employees experiencing domestic violence, More details at <https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/pledges/pledge/?pl=46>
- Encourage employers to hold details of relevant women’s organisations, local charities, informal social groups, religious groups and inter-governmental organisations in order to signpost those affected by domestic abuse, rape, stalking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Champion the work of community and voluntary organisations dealing with the issue of ending violence against women, and develop relationships with external refuges, Rape Crisis centres and other support organisations to provide information to members and to encourage women members to become involved as volunteers or in fundraising.
- Raise the awareness of the difference between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage, and of the Forced Marriages Act that allows local authorities and members of the public to apply for an injunction if they think a

child is at risk of being taken out of the country.

- Promote the Home Office leaflet 'Female Genital Mutilation – The Facts'  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-leaflet](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-leaflet) and help raise awareness of those who have already suffered and to prevent the practice of (FGM).
- Support the White Ribbon campaign, which focuses on men speaking out and educating men and boys on ending violence against women.
- Participate in a local Reclaim the Night march – or if there isn't one near you, organise one – held each November to raise the issue of violence against women and make the point that women have the right to feel safe on the streets at night.
- Highlight the barriers for working women accessing support in order for them to leave abusive relationships, including denying women access to safe accommodation and the impact of 'means tested' benefits including legal aid provision.
- Campaign for the restoration of Legal Aid for family issues including domestic abuse without the current stringent requirement for proof of domestic abuse.
- Challenge proposals to cut specialist services for women experiencing domestic abuse and request equality impact assessments from local authorities where services are being denied funds.

- Lobby the government on the benefits of statutory training on domestic abuse within the public sector.
- Work with relevant organisations to campaign for a better sentencing policy; continued reform of the judicial process to improve reporting and conviction; a national violence against women strategy; proper funding for Rape Crisis centres.
- Publicise to your members the help that is available to them through UNISON's charity 'There for You'.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

### ***More information***



- **Resources for women members**

[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

- **There for you**

There for You offers a unique confidential advice and support service just for members of UNISON and their dependants.

[www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou)

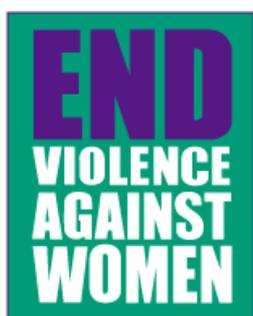


The voice of Britain at work. With 51 affiliated unions representing nearly 6 million working people from all walks of

life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

The Trade Union Congress  
Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3LS  
Tel: 020 7636 4030  
[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- Violence against women  
[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/violence-against-women](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/violence-against-women)



A leading coalition of specialist women's support services, researchers, activists, survivors and NGOs working to end violence against women in all its forms.

End Violence Against Women Coalition  
3rd Floor, Tindlemannor  
52-54 Featherstone Street  
London EC1Y 8RT  
Tel: 020 7096 2067  
Email: [admin@evaw.org.uk](mailto:admin@evaw.org.uk)  
[www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)

**women's aid**  
until women & children are safe

The national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children.

Women's Aid Federation of England

PO BOX 3245  
Bristol BS2 2EH  
Tel: 0117 944 44 11  
Email: [info@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:info@womensaid.org.uk)  
Freephone 24 hr national domestic violence helpline: 0808 2000 247  
Email: [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk)  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)



The lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse.

Scottish Women's Aid  
2nd Floor, 132 Rose Street  
Edinburgh EH2 3JD  
Tel: 0131 226 6606  
Domestic abuse helpline: 0800 027 1234  
[www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk)



**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru**  
**Welsh Women's Aid**

Campaigning and lobbying for improvements in public policy and government legislation in relation to women and children experiencing domestic abuse in Wales.

Welsh Womens Aid  
Pendragon House, Caxton Place  
Pentwyn  
Cardiff, CF23 8XE  
Tel: 02920 541 551  
Email: [admin@welshwomensaid.org.uk](mailto:admin@welshwomensaid.org.uk)  
[www.welshwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk)  
Live Fear Free Helpline: 0808 8010 800  
Email: [info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales)



Federation Northern Ireland

The lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic and sexual violence and providing services for women and children.

Women's Aid Federation NI  
129 University Street  
Belfast BT7 1HP  
028 9024 9041  
info@womensaidni.org  
24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Helpline: 0808 802 1414  
Text support to 07797 805 839  
Email: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org



The charity is committed to a world where domestic violence is not tolerated and where women and children can live in safety.

Tel: 020 7395 7700  
Email: info@refuge.org.uk  
Freephone 24 hr national domestic  
violence helpline: 0808 2000 247  
Email: helpline@refuge.org.uk  
www.refuge.org.uk



Rape Crisis England & Wales is a feminist organisation that exists to promote the needs and rights of women and girls who

have experienced sexual violence, to improve services to them and to work towards the elimination of sexual violence.

Rape Crisis  
2nd Floor, Symons House  
Belgrave Street  
Leeds LS2 8DD  
Email: rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk  
Rape Crisis helpline: 0808 802 9999  
between 12 noon- 2.30pm and 7 –  
9.30pm any day of the year and  
also between 3 - 5.30pm on weekdays  
www.rapecrisis.org.uk



The national office for the rape crisis movement in Scotland.

Rape Crisis Scotland  
46 Bath Street  
Glasgow G2 1HG  
Tel: 0141 331 4180  
Email: info@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk  
Free Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline, 6pm  
to midnight: 08088 010302  
Email: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk  
www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk



A trauma-informed service established to assist high risk victims of stalking in England Wales following the highly successful Stalking Law Reform campaign

in Parliament spearheaded by Laura Richards and others.

Paladin  
PO Box 72962  
London N7 1DZ  
Email: [info@paladinservice.co.uk](mailto:info@paladinservice.co.uk)  
Tel: 020 3866 4107  
<http://paladinservice.co.uk>

National Stalking Helpline:  
0808 802 0300  
[www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)



A registered charity that supports victims and survivors of forced marriage and honour based abuse.

Karma Nirvana  
PO BOX 515  
Leeds LS6 9DW  
Helpline: 0800 5999 247  
[www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)



FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development) is a leading African diaspora women's campaign and support organisation, committed to gender equality and safeguarding the rights of African girls and women.

FORWARD  
Suite 2.1, Chandelier Building  
8 Scrubs Lane  
London NW10 6RB  
Tel: 020 8960 4000

E-mail: [forward@forwarduk.org.uk](mailto:forward@forwarduk.org.uk)  
[www.forwarduk.org.uk](http://www.forwarduk.org.uk)

The NSPCC have a helpline dedicated to FGM that is anonymous and open 24/7:  
0800 028 3550



Since 2004, the London Feminist Network has organised an annual, national women's Reclaim the Night march against rape and all forms of male violence against women.  
[www.reclaimthenight.co.uk](http://www.reclaimthenight.co.uk)



This movement is made up of thousands of women who are united by outrage at the continued daily, hourly, minute-by-minute individual and institutionalised male violence enacted against women worldwide.

Million Women Rise  
c/o Women's Resource Centre  
United House  
North Road  
London, N7 9DP  
Email: [info@millionwomenrise.com](mailto:info@millionwomenrise.com)  
Tel: 07 727 419634  
[www.millionwomenrise.com](http://www.millionwomenrise.com)



The WRC is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men's violence against women.

White Ribbon House  
1 New Road  
Mytholmroyd  
Hebden Bridge HX7 5DZ  
Tel: 01422 886545  
Email: [info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](mailto:info@whiteribboncampaign.co.uk)  
[www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk](http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk)



A women's charity aiming to provide women with the legal advice and information they need to understand and use the law and their legal rights. They also work to improve the law for women and increase women's access to justice.  
[www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)



The leading national umbrella body for women's charities, with over 500 members.

Women's Resource Centre  
United House  
North Road  
London N7 9DP  
Tel: 020 7697 3450  
Email: [admin@wrc.org.uk](mailto:admin@wrc.org.uk)  
[www.wrc.org.uk](http://www.wrc.org.uk)

# Women's health

Women having control over their own bodies is central to achieving women's equality, and UNISON is committed to campaigning to ensure that women have all the information they need to make choices about their health and well being.

## Protecting women's mental health

The issue of work-related stress continues to be a major concern. UNISON branches have been successful in negotiating workplace policies on stress and mental wellbeing and supporting members to remain in work, and UNISON has won compensation for members forced out of

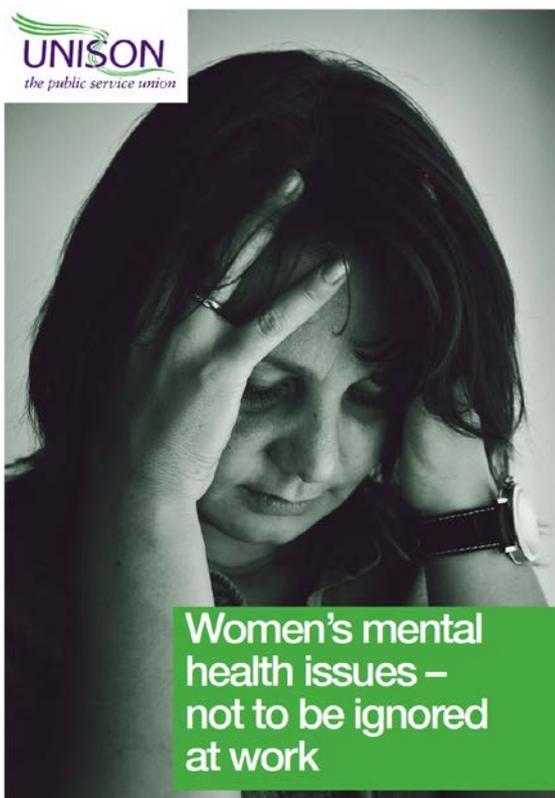
the workplace by unsympathetic employers.

UNISON's research has shown that some of the major causes of work-related stress are being set unrealistic deadlines, lack of control and conflicting demands, repetitive work, boredom and lack of job satisfaction, job insecurity, low pay, working alone, bullying and harassment.

All of these factors are particularly predominant in the female workforce, with low paid, Black, disabled and LGBT women more vulnerable to many of these situations. Young women too are especially under pressure as they are new to the world of work, often experience the lowest levels of pay, and can experience high levels of bullying and harassment.

Women may additionally be juggling caring commitments for children and older relatives with their work; facing physical health problems and potentially be in financial difficulty as a result of lifelong low pay, loss of a partner or relationship breakdown.

UNISON reps report that they are seeing increasing numbers of women seeking advice and support for stress-related issues, often presenting as increased sickness absence, poor timekeeping or poor performance, but frequently and worryingly also reporting depression and suicidal thoughts.





Other mental health problems are also more prevalent in women, with anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders twice as common and eating disorders as high as ten times more common. Isolation in old age can also lead to mental health problems such as depression, exacerbated by the cuts in services in health, public transport, day centres and other community facilities. Post-natal depression can have a particularly detrimental impact on day-to-day living and lead to the need to have additional periods of time off work to address the issue. Yet mental health problems remain a generally taboo subject.

It is essential that women are provided with the proper support to enable them to remain in the workforce in a secure and supportive environment. But the cuts and impact of fragmentation and privatisation within the NHS continue to limit the

availability and access to mental health services, services that are proportionately more used by women.

## **Breast cancer awareness and better treatment**

Key to the continuing campaign for a breast cancer free future for all girls and women, is the improvement of the treatment of cancer patients, including improving services for people with lymphoedema.

It is important for women, whether they are ultimately diagnosed with breast cancer or not, that the time spent waiting for an appointment or results is as short as possible and that when they choose to make their conditions known they are supported in the workplace. Many women diagnosed with breast cancer do not know what help and



Stomach pain?  
**Bloating?**  
 Struggling to eat?  
**Weeing more often?**

**For more information talk to Ovarian Cancer Action today**  
 Call 0300 456 4700  
 or email [info@ovarian.org.uk](mailto:info@ovarian.org.uk)

**Don't ignore these symptoms.**  
 If you're experiencing any of these symptoms of ovarian cancer on most days don't wait for them to go away.  
**Talk to your GP.**  
 Also look out for back pain, diarrhoea or constipation and persistent tiredness.

ethnic women that is tailored specifically to their cultural values and beliefs.

## Ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer in women in the UK, affecting around 6,800 women. It is the highest gynaecological killer of women in the UK and the fourth most common cause of death from cancer in women, with two out of every three cases of ovarian cancer being diagnosed when the disease has spread, thus limiting the treatment options.

Survival rates from ovarian cancer are low in the UK, with only 30% of women diagnosed with the disease surviving five

years beyond diagnosis. The survival rates have hardly improved over the past twenty years. There needs to be an improvement in early stage diagnosis techniques and further research in prevention, detection, treatment and cures of ovarian cancer.

Ovarian cancer was once known as a 'silent' disease in that the symptoms can be vague, but evidence now shows that any of the following three symptoms, if they occur on most days, can suggest ovarian cancer:

support they are entitled to. Many suffer genuine hardship when facing breast cancer and undergoing treatment for this devastating disease.

Research also shows that Black and Asian women diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK have poorer relative survival rates than white women, and were diagnosed with a worse prognosis than those in other ethnic groups. It is recognised that there is a need to provide culturally sensitive care and support to Black women and minority

- Persistent pelvic and abdominal pain
- Increased abdominal size/persistent bloating – not bloating that comes and goes
- Difficulty eating and feeling full quickly.

Occasionally other symptoms such as urinary symptoms, changes in bowel habit, extreme fatigue or back pain may also be experienced on their own or at the same time as those listed above. Again, it is most likely that these symptoms are not ovarian cancer, but may be present in some women with the disease.

## Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer remains the most common cancer in women under the age of 35 and yet cervical cancer screening can prevent up to 80% of cases of the disease. Up to 3,000 women are diagnosed each year and up to 1,000 women die per year in spite of screening being available.

High-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is the main potentially avoidable risk factor for cervical cancer, linked to an estimated 100% of cervical cancer cases in the UK. Some other factors may relate to cervical cancer risk partly because they are related to HPV.

In most cases HPV is shed from the body and causes no harm, however for some the virus causes changes to the cells of the cervix that if left untreated can develop into cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer is largely preventable through regular cervical screening and

the newly introduced HPV vaccination programme – which UNISON campaigned to make available free of charge.

Delay in first screening can result in a greater risk of being diagnosed with cervical cancer or high-grade abnormal cells – this diagnosis will often require invasive and radical treatment. If diagnosed earlier the level of intervention is often less radical and less invasive.

As women are becoming sexually active at a much younger age, screening should start within 2 years of becoming active but yet it is only available for women aged between 25 and 65. Screening stops at 65 as it is believed that most women will have settled with



**A smear test  
lasts 5 minutes.**

**The impact of cervical cancer  
lasts a lifetime.**

**Attend your smear test.  
Reduce your risk.**

Jo's cervical cancer trust  Call our helpline: **0808 802 8000** Find us online: **jostrust.org.uk**

Registered in England and Wales, Company Limited by Guarantee. 111 311. Registered Charity No. 1133401/1022278

one long term partner by 65. However statistics show that more women than ever before are getting divorced in their 60s and enjoying renewed sexual activity.

## **Black women and cervical cancer**

Recent studies have found that more Black women do not attend a screening appointment compared to white British women, perhaps due to lack of knowledge about the process and the benefits in preventing cancer.

Black women are also more likely to develop cervical cancer and to die from it, perhaps as a consequence of less access to screening and follow-up health care, as well as a lower level of awareness of symptoms.

## **Endometriosis and Adenomyosis**

Endometriosis and adenomyosis are chronic and painful conditions where cells from the lining of the womb are deposited in other parts of the body instead of being lost during menstruation.

These cells continue to change in size and bleed in response to a woman's normal menstrual cycle. This can affect bowel, bladder and kidney function, and cause pain in joints and bleeding from the sites where cells are. The impact is more than gynaecological, particularly if other organs are affected.

Endometriosis is the second most common gynaecological condition in the UK. It affects more than 1.5 million

women in the UK beyond puberty, regardless of age, ethnicity and reproductive history.

10% of women worldwide have endometriosis - that's 176 million women worldwide.

The symptoms include: persistent pain, heavy and irregular periods, painful urination, bowel problems, particularly diarrhoea and bloating, back and joint pain, depression and pain during sex.

Endometriosis is a condition to which there is no cure, only treatment. It can have a massive impact on a woman's life including difficulty in fulfilling work and social commitments. Yet it is a condition of which many people are unaware and many women can find it hard to talk about and to get support.

Few HR and Occupational Health departments are well informed about this disease; sickness absence and health and safety policies are often not supportive of women with this condition.



## Fibroids

Fibroids are small benign tumours that grow on the walls of the womb, inside and out, and can range from a single growth to multiple. For most women they give no cause for concern and grow unnoticed. But, for others, the genetic disorder can mean heavy and painful periods and lead to fatigue and anaemia. In the worst cases, it can make conceiving more complicated, cause infertility and increase the risk of miscarriage. Common indications are pain, heavy menstrual bleeding, pressure on adjacent organs such as the bladder.

Black women suffer disproportionately from fibroids and are three to five times more likely to develop them than white women. Black women also tend to have larger, more numerous fibroids at diagnosis. Fibroids seem to occur at a younger age and grow more quickly in Black women as well.

Those who are overweight, started puberty early, or have not had children, are also more likely to have fibroids. The most common form of treatment for fibroids is a hysterectomy, the removal of the womb. Fibroids are the reason behind 30% of hysterectomies in white women and over 50% of hysterectomies in Black

women.

For women still hoping to conceive, they can undergo a myomectomy which removes the fibroids, but leaves the womb untouched. However, myomectomies have a high recurrence rate of about 75% meaning a life spent in and out of hospital.

Fibroid embolisations – an alternative treatment – involves injecting grain-sized particles into the womb using small needles that cause the fibroids to dry up and shrink by 60%. The recovery period is two weeks and although there are a few side effects, including abdominal pain and passing big blood clots, the treatment has almost permanent results without the need for a full operation.

Although the procedure is available on the NHS, GPs rarely recommend it or present it to patients as one of their options.

## Group B Streptococcus

Group B streptococcus (GBS) also known as group B strep, is one of many different bacteria that live inside a body. About a third of us have GBS in our gut without even knowing it.

About a quarter of women also have GBS in their vagina although there will

**Are you Group B Strep aware?**

contact us for more information

**Group B Strep Support**  
Preventing GBS infection in newborn babies  
Tel: 01444 416176  
www.gbss.org.uk

prevention  
education  
support  
research

Registered charity number: 1120662  
Registered company number: 08187614

not be any obvious symptoms. GBS bacteria can also be passed from a woman to her baby during labour and this doesn't usually cause problems. Most women who carry GBS bacteria have healthy babies. Only in rare cases does GBS cause serious illness and even more rarely, death of the baby.

However even a low risk can be avoided through one simple test and countries who use the test have seen the incidence of death in babies due to GBS infection fall by 71-86%.

There is currently no routine testing for Group B Strep during pregnancy within the NHS. If it is known that the expectant mother is a carrier of Group B Strep simple precautions can be taken that reduce the mortality rate.

## Menopause

Women experiencing debilitating menstrual and menopausal symptoms continue to experience pressure and prejudice about having 'women's problems'. Although symptoms may last a comparatively short time, they can frequently trigger formal monitoring procedures at work.

In a number of work places, gender specific illnesses/conditions are dealt with outside the absence/sickness policies. UNISON believes that absences as a result of issues relating to pregnancy, the menopause or the menstrual cycle/periods should not be recorded in the same way as any other sickness absence.

All menopause-related sickness absence should be recorded as an ongoing issue, rather than individual absences. Many employers use the Bradford Factor to evaluate sickness absence, which penalises frequent short term absences by assigning a negative score to the employee whilst making allowances for a few periods of long-term absence.

Working time arrangements should be flexible enough to ensure that they meet the needs of menopausal women, who may require leave suddenly at short notice. They may also need more or lengthier comfort breaks during the day. But menopause remains a hidden issue and is often trivialised by management and HR departments.

Supporting  
working women  
through the  
**menopause**

GUIDANCE FOR UNION  
REPRESENTATIVES

TUC

## ***Campaign ideas***

- Negotiate sickness absence management workplace policies that are fair and non-discriminatory, and that have agreements on gender specific illness/conditions.
- Promote policies within the workplace to support the healthy work-life balance for women members and that protect the working conditions of our women members.
- Negotiate disability leave with employers (further information from 'Disability leave – model agreement and Disability leave – question and answer factsheet' available at [www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/disabled-members](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/disabled-members)).
- Support the work of women's health charities and research organisations.
- Raise awareness of the rising rate of stress-related mental health problems and how they can best be reduced, managed and controlled.
- Negotiate with employers to make adequate provision through employee assistance programmes etc. for employees experiencing stress and mental health issues, and to ensure that they are promoted properly, especially to young women employees.
- Promote guidance on work-related stress and mental wellbeing through branches, regions and women's networks, and use the UNISON factsheets on 'Women's health – a workplace issue' ([www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/09/23402.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/09/23402.pdf)) and 'Women's mental health issues – not to be ignored at work' ([www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/09/23403.pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/09/23403.pdf)).
- Promote the National Mental Health Day on 10 October each year.
- Work with Labour Link, relevant voluntary sector organisations and others to campaign for proper investment into mental health services.
- Spread awareness of breast cancer and lymphoedema, and the treatment and support services available in your area.
- Negotiate with employers for women to have the right to attend screening sessions during work time without loss of pay, and for those diagnosed to be fully supported during their treatment and, when appropriate, their return to work.
- Make sure women members with breast cancer and lymphoedema are aware of their rights under the Equality Act, and in particular the requirement for reasonable adjustments.
- Lobby the government and MPs to ensure cancer services are improved through the whole cancer journey; from prevention and early diagnosis through to survivorship and end of life and for increased public funding of research.
- Lobby for funding and to raise awareness of the need for personalised prosthesis, wigs and other specialised equipment for

Black women who are undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

- Raise awareness amongst UNISON members of the symptoms of ovarian cancer, including promoting Ovarian Cancer Action's symptom diary available at <http://ovarian.org.uk/news-and-campaigning/article/ovarian-cancer-action-launch-mobile-phone-symptoms-app-to-improve-early-dia> and the relatively simple tests available that could aid early detection.
- Campaign for leaflets and information regarding women's health to be produced in community languages other than English that are accessible and widely available.
- Help ensure that the economic burden of a cancer diagnosis is reduced by raising awareness of any benefits women are entitled to claim and the support available from UNISON's charity There for You.
- Campaign for the government to have the age restrictions lifted on cervical screening and to make screening available to all women.
- Raise awareness among UNISON members of the symptoms of cervical cancer and the importance of attending regular screening.
- Raise awareness of endometriosis and of the cost to women suffering from this condition financially and physically.
- Raise awareness of fibroids, and how it disproportionately affects Black women and the different

treatment alternatives, particularly the alternatives to hysterectomies.

- Raise awareness and highlight the importance of Group B strep screening.
- Provide guidance to women in your branch on the symptoms and effects of Group B strep.
- Promote the petition calling on the government to ensure a Group B Strep test is available to all women [www.gbss.org.uk/campaigning/parliament/current-petition](http://www.gbss.org.uk/campaigning/parliament/current-petition)
- Raise awareness of how some conditions such as premenstrual syndrome or other menstrual disorders that affect women but are short-lived should not result in the use of conduct or capability procedures.
- Urge branch secretaries to prioritise negotiating protection for women with menopause in line with the UNISON guide in their health and wellbeing workplace policies.
- Encourage more women members to become health and safety reps and ensure that women members' concerns and priorities are adequately reflected in the workplace health and safety agenda.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## More information



- **Resources for women members**

[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

- **Stress**

[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/stress](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/stress)

- **Gender, safety and health**

This guide (available from the online catalogue, stock number 1982) highlights the different health and safety risks that female and male workers are exposed to at work.

[www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue)

- **Menopause and work guide for UNISON safety reps**

This guide (available from the online catalogue, stock number 3075) considers menopause as an occupational health issue.

[www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue)

- **There for you**

There for You offers a unique confidential advice and support service just for members of UNISON and their dependants.

[www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou)



Providing advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They campaign to improve

services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Mind

15-19 Broadway

Stratford

London E15 4BQ

Tel: 020 8519 2122

Email: [Supporterservices@mind.org.uk](mailto:Supporterservices@mind.org.uk)

Mind Cymru

3rd Floor, Castlebridge 4

Castlebridge

5-19 Cowbridge Road East,

Cardiff CF11 9AB

Tel: 029 2039 5123

Email: [supporterservices@mind.org.uk](mailto:supporterservices@mind.org.uk)



SAMH, the Scottish Association for Mental Health, is Scotland's leading mental health charity.

SAMH

Brunswick House

51 Wilson Street

Glasgow G1 1UZ

Tel: 0141 530 1000

Email: [enquire@samh.org.uk](mailto:enquire@samh.org.uk)

[www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk)



Niamh, (the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health), is the largest and longest established independent charity

focusing on mental health and wellbeing services in Northern Ireland.

Niamh  
80 University Street  
Belfast BT7 1HE  
Tel: 028 9032 8474  
Email: [info@niamhwellbeing.org](mailto:info@niamhwellbeing.org)  
[www.niamhwellbeing.org](http://www.niamhwellbeing.org)



Dedicated to achieving the primary prevention of breast cancer by campaigning to reduce our exposure to the carcinogenic and hazardous chemicals in our environment and everyday products.

Breast Cancer UK  
BM Box 7767  
London WC1N 3XX  
Tel: 0845 680 1322  
[www.breastcanceruk.org.uk](http://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk)



The only UK wide charity providing care, information and support to people affected by breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Care  
5-13 Great Suffolk Street  
London SE1 0NS  
Email: [info@breastcancercare.org.uk](mailto:info@breastcancercare.org.uk)  
Tel: 0345 092 0800  
Breast health enquiries: 0808 800 6000  
[www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)



The UK's largest breast cancer charity (formed from the merger of Breakthrough Breast Cancer and Breast Cancer Campaign) dedicated to funding research into this devastating disease.

Tel: 0333 20 70 300  
[www.breastcancernow.org](http://www.breastcancernow.org)

Breast Cancer Now  
5th Floor Ibex House  
42 - 47 Minories  
London EC3N 1DY

Scotland office:  
Breast Cancer Now  
38 Thistle Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 1EN



A membership organisation, registered charity and the UK's national patient support organisation for lymphoedema.

Lymphoedema Support Network  
St. Luke's Crypt  
Sydney Street  
London SW3 6NH  
Tel: 020 7351 0990  
Email: [admin@lsn.org.uk](mailto:admin@lsn.org.uk)  
[www.lymphoedema.org](http://www.lymphoedema.org)

## Be Breast Aware

A leaflet to explain to women how to be aware of changes in their breasts. Available in 18 languages and large print. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-breast-screening-awareness-leaflet](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-breast-screening-awareness-leaflet)



The UK's ovarian cancer research charity. They fund research to save lives.

Ovarian Cancer Action  
8-12 Camden High Street  
London NW1 0JH  
Tel: 0207 380 1730  
Email: [info@ovarian.org.uk](mailto:info@ovarian.org.uk)  
[www.ovarian.org.uk](http://www.ovarian.org.uk)



The UK's leading ovarian cancer charity. We work to improve early diagnosis, fund life-saving research and provide much-needed support to women with ovarian cancer.

Target Ovarian Cancer  
2 Angel Gate  
London EC1V 2PT  
Tel: 020 7923 5470  
Email: [info@targetovariancancer.org.uk](mailto:info@targetovariancancer.org.uk)  
[www.targetovariancancer.org.uk](http://www.targetovariancancer.org.uk)



The only UK charity dedicated to women and their families affected by cervical cancer and cervical abnormalities. They offer a range of information and support and raise awareness about how cervical cancer can be prevented and campaign for best care and treatment.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust  
CAN Mezzanine  
49 – 51 East Road  
London N1 6AH  
Tel: 020 7250 8311  
Helpline: 0808 802 8000  
Email: [info@jostrust.org.uk](mailto:info@jostrust.org.uk)  
[www.jostrust.org.uk](http://www.jostrust.org.uk)



## endometriosis uk

Working to improve the lives of people affected by endometriosis and to decrease the impact it has on those with the condition and their families and friends.

Endometriosis UK  
Suites 1 & 2,  
46 Manchester Street,  
London W1U 7LS  
Helpline: 0808 808 2227  
Telephone: 020 7222 2781  
[www.endometriosis-uk.org](http://www.endometriosis-uk.org)



UK based voluntary not-for-profit organisation which is run by volunteers. We provide balanced information, independent of health care provider's interests.  
[www.britishfibroidtrust.org.uk](http://www.britishfibroidtrust.org.uk)



The only UK charity dedicated to eradicating group B Strep infections, including meningitis, in babies.

Group B Strep Support  
P O Box 203  
Haywards Heath  
RH16 1GF  
Tel: 01444 416 176  
Email: [info@gbss.org.uk](mailto:info@gbss.org.uk)  
[www.gbss.org.uk](http://www.gbss.org.uk)



A charitable organisation that aims to help educate and support women with their healthcare by providing unbiased, accurate information.

Women's Health Concern  
Spracklen House, East Wing  
Dukes Place  
Marlow  
Buckinghamshire SL7 2QH  
Tel: 01628 890199  
[www.womens-health-concern-org](http://www.womens-health-concern-org)

# Abortion rights

UNISON believes that a woman's right to choose with regards to abortion is fundamental to her political, social and economic equality. Control over whether, when and how many children to have is crucial to control over every other aspect of a woman's life. An overwhelming three quarters of people in Britain support a woman's right to make her own abortion decision.

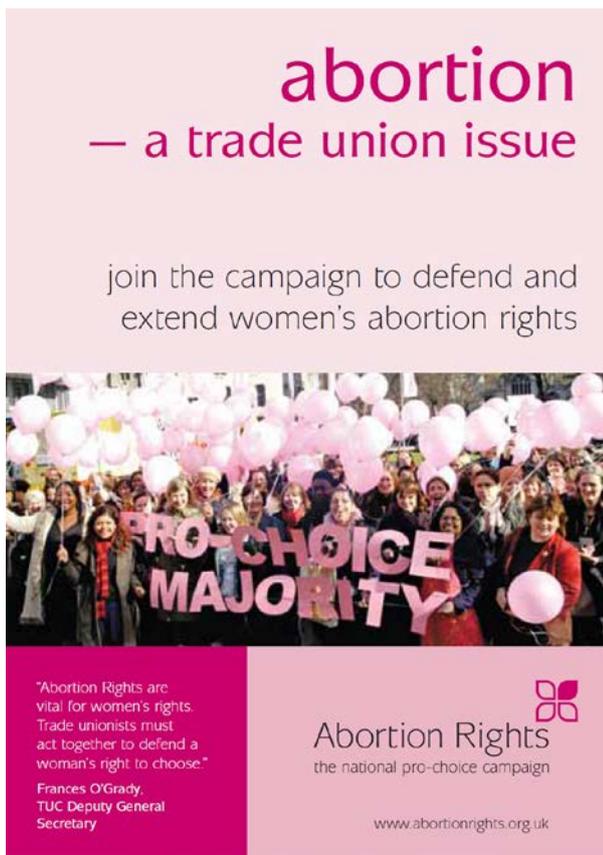
against women. For 30 years Britain has had this legislation, yet still many women are unable to access an abortion within the NHS. Attacks on UNISON's pro choice policy and support of Abortion Rights UK continue, along with groups picketing outside of UK abortion clinics, with the intention of harassing intimidating women and clinic staff.

Concern has been expressed that the 1967 Act has never been extended to Northern Ireland. Women in Northern Ireland don't have access to abortion services unless in exceptional circumstances. Many northern Irish women face travel to the UK to access abortion services at their own cost. Fees, accommodation, and travel expenses make the cost prohibitive for others.

Women must have access to unbiased, unprejudiced, clinically sound and researched information regarding all pregnancy choices including abortion, free from interference and intimidation.

## International abortion rights

Internationally, it is estimated that nearly 70,000 women die each year due to botched terminations. They seek them because their government denies them the right to a safe abortion, even in extreme cases such as where their life



The poster features a pink background with the text 'abortion — a trade union issue' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, it says 'join the campaign to defend and extend women's abortion rights'. A central photograph shows a group of women holding pink balloons and a banner that reads 'PRO-CHOICE MAJORITY'. At the bottom left, there is a quote: 'Abortion Rights are vital for women's rights. Trade unionists must act together to defend a woman's right to choose.' followed by 'Frances O'Grady, TUC Deputy General Secretary'. At the bottom right, the 'Abortion Rights' logo (a stylized four-petaled flower) is shown above the text 'Abortion Rights the national pro-choice campaign' and the website 'www.abortionrights.org.uk'.

Abortion has been legal in Britain since 1967 but the law creates unnecessary obstacles and delays which discriminate

is in danger or they are the victim of rape.

Reproductive rights are under attack from religious and far right extremists across the globe and this attack is part of a broader attempt to control both sexual and reproductive freedoms in the name of 'family' and 'traditional' values. They seek to control and curtail the rights and equality both of women and of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, with United States organisations in particular pushing a programme of anti-LGBT legislation, abstinence based sexual health education and limits to family planning and abortion in Africa.

### ***Campaign ideas***

- Raise awareness on the issues facing women choosing to exercise their rights to seek an abortion.
- Lobby your MP to ensure that they support a woman's right to choose, including simplifying the law to allow access to free and safe abortion for all women; bringing the law on abortion into line with other medical practice by allowing for one doctor's signature to consent to an abortion, not two; extending the law on abortion to Northern Ireland, where abortion is still illegal and work with Labour Link to ensure that women's voices are heard during any parliamentary debates.
- Lobby MPs on a statutory 'buffer zone' for all pickets outside clinics.
- Hold a 'speak out' event where women tell stories about their experiences of abortion, to explode

abortion myths – women who have abortions are not feckless and irresponsible!

- Work with and support affiliated and sympathetic organisations such as Abortion Rights UK and the Back Off campaign in highlighting these attacks on women's rights and defending a women's right to choose.
- Work with appropriate women's groups to research and ascertain the scale of activity of pro-life groups and the impact of these campaigners on a woman's choice.
- Encourage women to undertake leadership and political training and to get involved in politics and their trade union; ensuring women's issues are debated predominantly by women.
- Circulate The Abortion Rights Newsletter through women's networks.
- Work with your regional TUC to ensure a co-ordinated approach in challenging and lobbying against any detrimental changes to abortion counselling.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## More information



The national pro-choice campaign. They campaign to defend and extend women's rights and access to safe, legal abortion.

Abortion Rights  
18 Ashwin St  
London E8 3DL  
Tel: 0207 923 9792  
Email: [choice@abortionrights.org.uk](mailto:choice@abortionrights.org.uk)  
[www.abortionrights.org.uk](http://www.abortionrights.org.uk)



The voice of Britain at work. With 51 affiliated unions representing nearly 6 million working people from all walks of life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

The Trade Union Congress  
Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3LS  
Tel: 020 7636 4030  
[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- **Abortion rights**

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/abortion-rights](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/abortion-rights)



There has been an upsurge in anti-abortion activity outside clinics in the UK. Women attending pregnancy advice and abortion centres are now regularly exposed to groups of anti-abortion activists standing directly outside. This campaign aims to establish protest-free zones outside centres to provide the reassurance and security women and healthcare staff need.

<http://back-off.org/>

# Women internationally

UNISON's international policy includes contact with international organisations and sister unions abroad - sharing experiences, solidarity work and involving members to defend and promote public services and the people who provide them. UNISON is regularly involved in a number of projects which aim to assist trade unions abroad to increase their capacity, to defend their rights and to enable them to promote development by improving the lives of working people and creating a more just society.

## Women, the refugee crisis and trafficking

While war and conflict inflict suffering on everyone, women are disproportionately affected by forced displacement, destruction of civilian infrastructures, civil rights violations and by sexual and

gender-based violence. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reports that women and girls comprise about half of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless population.

For millions of refugees, the prospect of a better life in Europe has driven many to make the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean. Thousands have died en route. Their misery, which makes them easy prey for people smugglers, is part of a global phenomenon that produces almost \$26bn a year.

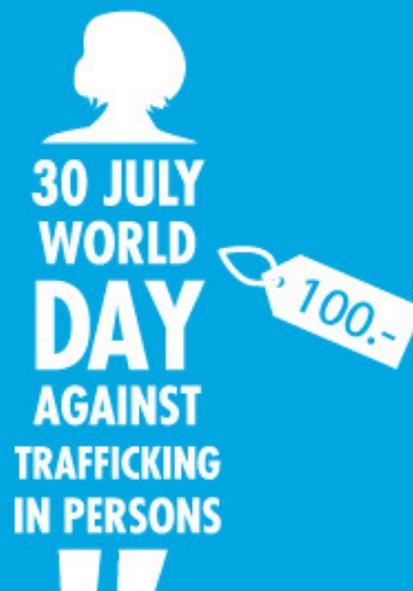
Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Afghanistan and parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia have all been affected. Among the displaced, women and children remain the most vulnerable. Never ending uncertainty, lack of privacy, lack of educational resources, violence, abject

Express your solidarity with the millions of victims of human trafficking by giving back what they had stolen from them: **hope**.

United Nations World Day against Trafficking in Persons, 30 July.

**#igivehope**

**[www.endHT.org](http://www.endHT.org)**



hunger and poverty, the threat of being trafficked into slavery are everyday realities faced by many.

Trafficking women and children specifically for sexual exploitation is a high-profit and low risk endeavour for traffickers and the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. Despite the fact international law and the laws of 134 countries criminalise sex trafficking, human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking. Nearly 100,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year of which more than 70% are women and half are children. Every 30 seconds, a child is trafficked, and the practice is often heightened in the wake of conflict or natural disaster.

The UK is a significant destination country for women, children and men to be trafficked. Women and girls make up 98% of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. One woman can earn a trafficker between £26,000 and £52,000 per year from one victim. Furthermore, 11% of British business leaders polled through YouGov admitted that it was 'likely' modern slavery was paying a part in their supply chain. Britain has averaged one supply chain crisis per year in the last three years.

Since Qatar was awarded the 2022 World Cup in 2010, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has exposed numerous violations of the rights of the more than one million migrant workers, including stories of increasing numbers of women and children in detention centres,

and rising discontent and unrest in workers in squalid labour camps.

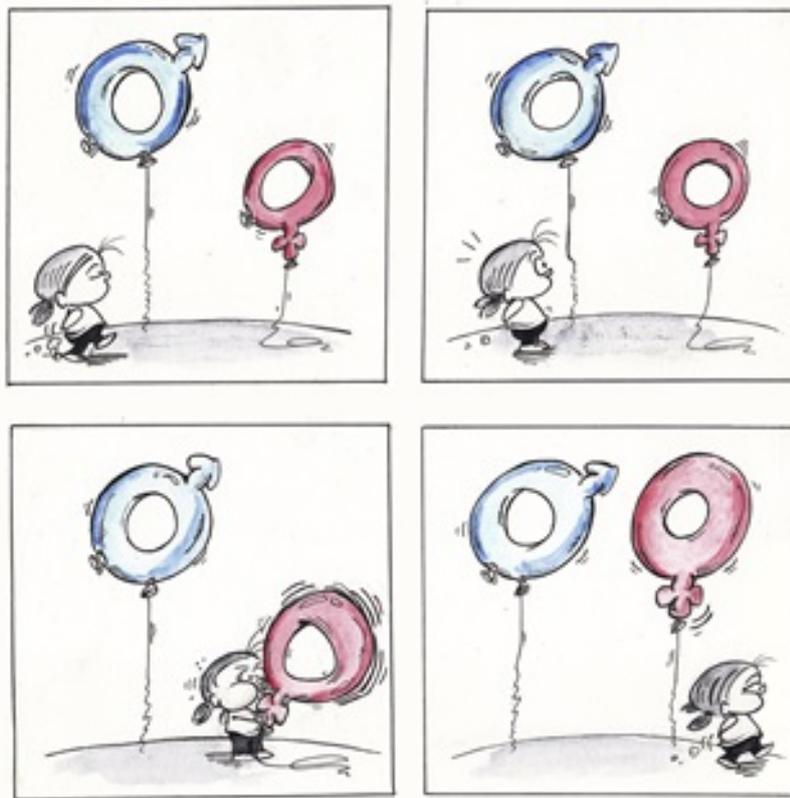
Workers describe being forced to work in 50C heat without drinking water by employers, who withhold salaries for several months and retain their passports to prevent them leaving the country. Sickness is endemic, living conditions are frequently overcrowded and insanitary, and many workers are going hungry. There is also evidence that contracted workers including porters, admin workers, cleaners, gardeners, etc, providing support services to universities in Doha including University College London's (UCL) Doha campus, are subject to abuses.

All sex trafficking and slavery violates basic human rights, including the rights to bodily integrity, equality, dignity, health, security, and freedom from violence and torture. Key international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), consider sex trafficking a form of sex discrimination and a human rights violation.

## **International day of the girl child**

The United Nations international day of the girl child, inaugurated in 2012, is celebrated on October 11. The day aims to help galvanise worldwide enthusiasm for goals to better girls' lives, providing an opportunity for them to show leadership and reach their full potential.

The event is particularly important in the context of the following disturbing statistics:



- Every 10 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence.

Although there is much practical work to be done to support young women and girls, the United Nations international day of the girl child is nonetheless an important development which should be supported as an opportunity to celebrate and to educate.

### ***Campaign ideas***

- There are nearly 600 million girls aged 10 to 19 in the world today.
- Only 30% of girls in the world are enrolled in secondary school.
- One in seven girls in developing countries is married off before age 15.
- Children as young as age 11 are forced to work as prostitutes, with some estimates having as many as 1.2 million children being trafficked every year.
- More than half of music videos feature a female portrayed exclusively as a decorative, sexual object.
- More than half (54%) of all rapes of females happen before age 18.
- Support and build on links with trade union women overseas and global women's organisations and get involved with international solidarity campaigns that highlight all forms of discrimination and violence against women.
- Affiliate your branch to those international organisations that are a priority for UNISON.
- Raise awareness amongst women members of UNISON's Trade Union International Development Fund that provides funding for international initiatives between UNISON and sister unions in other countries, and to encourage them to apply for such funding.
- Encourage UNISON women members to become involved by becoming Branch International Officers.

- Promote awareness of women-specific atrocities in countries that fall within the international work programme, and encourage regional international committees to include a gender element to their work programmes.
- Raise awareness across UNISON about the importance of messages of solidarity to persecuted human rights defenders.
- Engage with the UN Committee on the Ending of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and push for the UK government to actively support action to end violence against women internationally.
- Support the international world day against trafficking in human persons on 30 July.
- Support the Play Fair Qatar campaign and raise awareness of the campaign.
- Celebrate and raise awareness of international women's day on 8 March and the international day for the elimination of violence against women on 25 November.
- Encourage regional women's groups to work with regional young members forums to mark the international day of the girl child on October 11 and promote the day and linked events among members.
- Promote the ILGA-Europe website for the latest European anti-hate crime campaigns.

And don't forget, when you are planning your campaign, to talk to co-workers about the issues and recruit non-members into UNISON.

## More information



- **Resources for women members**  
[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)
- **Working internationally**  
[www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/working-internationally](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/working-internationally)



The voice of Britain at work. With 51 affiliated unions representing nearly 6 million working people from all walks of life, they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

The Trade Union Congress  
Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3LS  
Tel: 020 7636 4030  
[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- **International issues**  
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/international-issues>



**ITUC CSI IGB**  
**International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)**

This is the main international trade union organisation, representing the interests of working people worldwide.

ITUC

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5, Bte 1  
1210 Brussels, Belgium  
Email: [info@ituc-csi.org](mailto:info@ituc-csi.org)  
[www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)

- **Women**  
[www.ituc-csi.org/women](http://www.ituc-csi.org/women)



**European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)**

Europe's trade unions came together to form the ETUC, so as to speak with a single voice on behalf of European workers and have a stronger say in EU decision-making.

ETUC

Boulevard Roi Albert II, 5  
B-1210 Brussels, Belgium  
Email: [etuc@etuc.org](mailto:etuc@etuc.org)  
[www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org)

- **Gender equality**  
[www.etuc.org/issue/gender-equality](http://www.etuc.org/issue/gender-equality)



Public Services International is a global trade union federation representing 20 million working women and men who deliver vital public services in 150 countries.

Public Services International  
45 avenue Voltaire  
BP 9  
F- 01211 Ferney-Voltaire Cedex

France

Email: [psi@world-psi.org](mailto:psi@world-psi.org)  
[www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org)

- **Gender equality**  
[www.world-psi.org/en/issue/gender-equality](http://www.world-psi.org/en/issue/gender-equality)



Representing more than 20 million workers from over 900 trade unions in the fastest growing sectors in the world – skills and services.

Uni Global Union

8-10 Ave Reverdil  
1260 Nyon, Switzerland  
Email: [contact@uniglobalunion.org](mailto:contact@uniglobalunion.org)  
[www.uniglobalunion.org](http://www.uniglobalunion.org)

- **Equal opportunities**  
[www.uniglobalunion.org/groups/equal-opportunities/news](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/groups/equal-opportunities/news)



Bringing together trade unions from across Europe.

EPSU

Rue Joseph II, 40, Box 5  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Email: [epsu@epsu.org](mailto:epsu@epsu.org)  
[www.epsu.org](http://www.epsu.org)

- **Women and gender equality**

[www.epsu.org/search/networks/women-gender-equality](http://www.epsu.org/search/networks/women-gender-equality)



**Amnesty**

Working to protect men, women and children wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

Amnesty International UK  
Human Rights Action Centre  
17-25 New Inn Yard  
London EC2A 3EA  
General enquiries 020 7033 1500  
Email: [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)  
[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

- **Women's Human Rights**

[www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Women%27s-human-rights](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Women%27s-human-rights)



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

A movement of people who are committed to global justice.

War on Want  
44-48 Shepherdess Walk  
London N1 7JP  
Tel: 020 7324 5040  
[www.waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org)



A maternal health charity aiming to make birth safer in Sub Saharan Africa, by providing medication to treat eclampsia and post partum haemorrhage. They also facilitate midwifery training programmes in several countries to help train and update qualified midwives to enhance their clinical skills in caring for mother and baby.

Life for African Mothers  
Life for African Mothers  
6 Cathedral Road, Castle Court  
Cardiff CF11 9LJ  
Email:  
[angela.gorman@lifeforafricanmothers.org](mailto:angela.gorman@lifeforafricanmothers.org)  
<http://lifeforafricanmothers.org/>



A TUC campaign to raise awareness - working with football fans - of the abuse of worker rights to World Cup workers in Qatar.

[www.playfairqatar.org.uk](http://www.playfairqatar.org.uk)



**For a world free from slavery**

Working at local, national and international levels to eliminate all forms of slavery around the world.

Anti-Slavery International  
Thomas Clarkson House  
The Stableyard

Broomgrove Road  
London SW9 9TL  
Tel: 020 7501 8920  
Email: [info@antislavery.org](mailto:info@antislavery.org)  
[www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

Tel: 0117 941 5844  
Email: [info@labourbehindthelabel.org](mailto:info@labourbehindthelabel.org)  
[www.labourbehindthelabel.org](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org)



Supporting garment workers' efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions, through awareness raising, information provision and encouraging international solidarity between workers and consumers.

Labour Behind the Label  
The Easton Business Centre  
Felix Road  
Easton  
Bristol BS5 0HE



In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. It aims to be a dynamic and strong champion for women and girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels.

[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

# Get involved

This guide is an introduction to some of the issues that women's self organisation has identified as priorities. There are many more campaigns, and many more sources of information and support.

Keep up to date on our web pages at

**[www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)**

Facebook page at

**[www.facebook.com/unisonwomen](http://www.facebook.com/unisonwomen)**

Twitter **@WomenInUnison**

Get involved in your branch or regional women's group to make sure you hear about what's going on.



**“Never underestimate what we as women workers and women trade unionists can achieve through collective action...**

**A woman's right to choose; a woman's right to an education; and a woman's right to live free from violence. These are the causes that bring us together as trade unionists, as campaigners and as feminists. And let none of us rest until these fundamental human rights are a reality for every woman in every country in every continent.”**

Frances O'Grady, TUC general secretary

# Getting help from UNISON

There is a wealth of expertise within UNISON that is available to support you when you run campaigns.

**[www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns](http://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns)**

As a first point of call, check the website for contact details that relate to individual issues or call **UNISONDirect 0800 0857 857** for details of your regional contact.

**There for you** (formerly UNISON Welfare) may be able to provide support if you or members are dealing with any of the issues raised in this guide. 'There for you' is a unique confidential service offering advice and support just for UNISON members and their families, including:

- Financial assistance
- Debt advice
- Wellbeing breaks
- Support and information

'There for you' is a registered charity (No 1023552).

To find out more call **020 7121 5620** or email: **[thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk)** or visit the website:

**[www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou](http://www.unison.org.uk/thereforyou)**



Three simple ways to  
join UNISON today:



Join online at  
[joinunison.org](http://joinunison.org)



Call us on  
0800 171 2193



Ask your UNISON rep  
for an application form