



# UNITE WOMEN LEADING CHANGE



## Women are not on the margins of our industrial agenda – they are leading it.

Strengthening maternity and pregnancy protections, making flexible working the default in every job, ending precarious and insecure work, stamping out violence and harassment against women and closing the gender pay and pension gaps are not optional ambitions. They are core collective bargaining priorities, and our union is relentlessly campaigning to deliver them.

Women workers continue to face systemic barriers, including persistent pay gaps,



occupational segregation, insecure work and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care. These challenges are being compounded by emerging threats, such as the use of artificial intelligence that risks reinforcing misogyny, bias and discrimination through surveillance, algorithms making decisions and online abuse. Without unions new technologies will be used to deepen inequality rather than dismantle it. We have a critical role to play in confronting these challenges, ensuring women's voices are heard, rights are protected and hard-won progress is not reversed.

Whilst there are some hard-fought wins in the Employment Rights Act, under the current Labour Party government, too many promises have been delayed or diluted. When women look to the ERA to do away with their Zero hours contracts or stop being fired and rehired by an employer pleading poverty, they will see how far it falls short.

Women workers cannot afford further hesitation or compromise. Without clear timetables, robust enforcement mechanisms, meaningful penalties for non-compliance and a cast-iron guarantee of no further watering down of rights, it is certain the legislation will continue to move away from delivering the transformation working people were promised.

As we all know, when legislation falls short and employers drag their feet, it is trade union action

that delivers real results. Right now, we are in a cost-of-living crisis, where women continue to be hit hardest. At this time, it is vital that Unite continues to organise, negotiate and, when necessary, take industrial action to ensure women workers are protected and paid fairly.



We are already setting the pace and delivering real change for working women. Working together with our representatives, officers, organisers and staff, members have taken action that has returned millions of pounds to their pockets since last year's International Women's Day. And beyond disputes, further victories have been secured through determined negotiation. By equipping our reps with the evidence and confidence to challenge corporate greed, we are shifting the balance of power at the bargaining table and ensuring workers receive what they are owed – not token gestures, but a fair share of the wealth they create.

As we mark International Women's Day 2026 and honour the struggles and resistance led by women across the world, we must be clear: our union must continue to lead where others hesitate. Progress will not be handed to us by government; it will be won collectively, in workplaces and communities across the country. You have my full backing – on the shop floor, at the negotiating table and on the picket line.

**Solidarity,  
Sharon Graham**





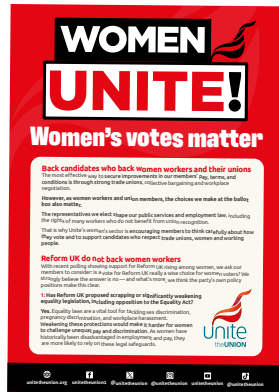
## Back candidates who back women workers and their unions!

The most effective way to secure improvements in our members' pay, terms, and conditions is through strong trade unions, collective bargaining and workplace negotiation. However, as women workers and union members, the choices we make at the ballot box also matter. The representatives we elect shape our public services and employment law, including the rights of many workers who do not benefit from union recognition.

That is why Unite's women's sector is encouraging members to think carefully about how they vote and to support candidates who respect trade unions, women and working people.

Check out our [National Women's Committee message to fellow women members](https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/sectors/women) <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/sectors/women>

Leaflet here: [https://www.unitetheunion.org/media/pfgfilmem/0706\\_women-unite-leaflet\\_final-digital.pdf](https://www.unitetheunion.org/media/pfgfilmem/0706_women-unite-leaflet_final-digital.pdf)



## WhatsApp community

Encouraging more women to become active in Unite strengthens our collective voice and ensures that the union truly reflects the diversity of its membership. When women step forward – as reps, activists, and workplace leaders – we build power, challenge inequality, and advance issues such as pay equity, flexible working, and safe workplaces.

Join our WhatsApp community that has been set up initially as a simple but effective way to get information quickly and mobilise around campaigns. This can be developed into accessible spaces for women members to engage with one another, build confidence, and play a fuller role in the life of the union.



Contact [UniteWomen@Unitetheunion.org](mailto:UniteWomen@Unitetheunion.org) for more information <https://chat.whatsapp.com/E7hP7TXaixxK2sf1EQyVMj>

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IS A CALL TO ACTION!**

## Zero Tolerance Campaign

Unite is leading a national campaign to secure standalone sexual harassment policies across every sector of the economy, beginning with a landmark agreement at Heathrow Airport. The newly signed policy covers all workers operating at the airport, including those directly employed by Heathrow Airport Limited as well as staff working for third-party companies such as British Airways and OCS Group. It marks the first standalone sexual harassment policy secured by Unite since changes to workplace sexual harassment law came into force in the UK in October 2024, setting an important precedent for other industries to follow.

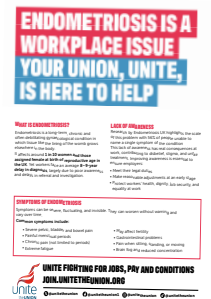
The agreement establishes clear and robust protections, including mandatory sexual harassment training for all employees – covering what behaviours constitute harassment – with formal sign-off requirements. It also commits employers to conducting regular risk assessments and to taking swift, effective action whenever sexual harassment is reported. Crucially, the policy sets out transparent procedures in cases where disciplinary action, including dismissal, follows a finding of sexual harassment. Unite's objective is to replicate this model nationwide, ensuring that every sector adopts comprehensive, enforceable standalone policies that prioritise prevention, accountability and worker safety.

Find our [model policy and further resources here](https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/zero-tolerance-to-sexual-harassment-know-your-rights). <https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/zero-tolerance-to-sexual-harassment-know-your-rights>



## Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a workplace issue and Trade Unions have a vital role in raising awareness, challenging discrimination, and negotiating policies that provide reasonable adjustments – such as flexible working, paid leave for medical appointments, and supportive sickness absence procedures. By recognising endometriosis as a legitimate workplace concern, unions help ensure that members are treated fairly and with dignity.



Please visit <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/sectors/women> to find our leaflet and model policy. Leaflet here: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/media/ganhb5fg/draft-jn0708-endometriosis-workplace-issue-a4.pdf>



## Employment Rights Act introduced in UK

The Employment Rights Act represents a positive step forward for women, particularly in strengthening protections around unfair dismissal, maternity rights and workplace flexibility. These measures provide greater security at key moments, helping to reduce vulnerability to discrimination and improve stability at work.

However, while welcome, the Act does not go far enough. It stops short of fully addressing structural issues such as the gender pay gap, insecure work, and the stronger enforcement mechanisms many campaigners have called for. Further progress will be needed to ensure that workplace rights genuinely deliver equality in practice, not just in principle. Contact your Regional Officer and watch out for detailed briefings on the changes and when they will be introduced.



## National Women's Week 22nd - 27th Nov

Our trade union education for women is vital because it equips our members with the knowledge and confidence to understand their workplace rights, challenge discrimination, and negotiate fair pay and conditions. National Women's Week runs every year and brings together women members from across our nations, regions and sectors to strengthen our voices collectively and help drive greater equality and fairness across our union. Whether it's finding out how to get more active in Unite, organising around issues, learning new campaign techniques or building leadership skills, there is a course for you.



Apply today. <https://www.unitetheunion.org/why-join/member-services/education/training-and-courses>

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## AI

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence presents both opportunities and serious risks for women at work.



AI systems used in recruitment, performance management and shift allocation can replicate and even intensify existing gender bias if they are built on flawed or unequal data. There are also growing concerns about surveillance technologies and the use of AI-driven monitoring, which can disproportionately affect women in insecure or lower-paid roles. In addition, the misuse of AI to create non-consensual "deepfake" images that digitally undress or exploit women is a serious violation of dignity and safety, with implications for workplace harassment and online abuse.

Unite has a crucial role in negotiating clear safeguards around the use of AI, demanding transparency in algorithmic decision-making, protecting data rights, and ensuring that technology enhances rather than undermines equality. AI must be subject to collective bargaining and robust regulation so that any advances support decent work, safety and respect for women in every sector.

Contact your Regional Women's and Equalities Officer for a copy of our motion on this being debated at Women's TUC <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/contact-us>

## Carers Network

The introduction of the Unite Carers Network is an important development in recognising the needs of members who balance paid employment with caring responsibilities. The network provides a structured forum for carers within the union to share experiences and raise workplace concerns which reflects our broader commitment to equality, inclusion, and fair treatment for all members. This is also fundamentally a workplace issue because employers have legal and practical responsibilities to consider reasonable adjustments, flexible working arrangements, and protection from discrimination related to caring status. By formally recognising carers through the network, we are strengthening our ability to advocate collectively for improved workplace policies, ensuring that carers are supported to remain in work without disadvantage.



Please visit our [equality resources pages](https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/sectors/women) <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/sectors/women> to find our carers passport and email [Equalities@unitetheunion.org](mailto:Equalities@unitetheunion.org) to join the mailing list. Meetings take place online every month.



## Women's networks

Unite women's sector has organised across some of our industrial networks to provide a dedicated space for support, solidarity, and collective action. These networks are complementary to our constitutional structures and have helped women share experiences, develop campaigns and address workplace issues such as preventing sexual harassment, toilet dignity and inadequate PPE.

By connecting women across workplaces and sectors, industrial networks strengthen our ability to identify inequalities and ensure that women's voices are central to bargaining, campaigning, and decision-making within the union. We have even taken our women's voices to Parliament so if you want to find out about how to set one up in your sector, please contact your Regional Women's and Equality Officer.



Contact us: [Unite Equalities - Unite The Union](https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/contact-us)  
[unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/contact-us](https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/contact-us)

## Union equality reps

Unite has long campaigned for the introduction of union equality representatives, recognising them as an important step in strengthening fairness, representation and inclusion in the workplace. Equality reps play a key role in identifying and challenging discrimination, raising awareness of equality issues, and promoting policies that uphold dignity and respect at work.



By giving dedicated focus to issues such as gender equality, disability rights, race equality, LGBT+ inclusion and the concerns of young members, union equality reps ensure that equality is embedded at the heart of our collective bargaining agenda and wider trade union activity, rather than treated as an afterthought. Make sure your workplace elects a union equality rep!

Find a copy of our handbook [here. unitetheunion.org/media/v2tpl40t/0090-a6-union-representatives-handbook.pdf](https://www.unitetheunion.org/media/v2tpl40t/0090-a6-union-representatives-handbook.pdf)

## WASPI Women

After years of campaigning, judicial challenges and parliamentary scrutiny, the UK Government has again refused to pay compensation to WASPI women. In late January 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions Secretary announced that, after a fresh review, it will not implement a compensation scheme for affected women, arguing that most were aware of the pension age change and that setting up a fair scheme now would be impractical and costly.

This is despite an ombudsman ruling that recognised compensation should be awarded as maladministration had occurred. Unite view the government's actions as a continued betrayal to the WASPI group and support their justice campaign in exploring legal and parliamentary routes to challenge the decision.



**Angela Madden, Chair of WASPI branch speaking at a Unite event**

## Women's development weekends

Development weekends for women union representatives are a vital part of strengthening our movement and building collective power. They provide a dedicated space for women reps to deepen their understanding of workplace rights, organising strategies, and negotiation skills, while sharing lived experiences and building solidarity across sectors and regions.

Women continue to face structural inequalities in the workplace, including pay gaps, insecure work, caring responsibilities, and under-representation in leadership so targeted development opportunities help equip our reps to challenge those inequalities effectively.

Contact your Regional Women's and Equality Officer for more information <https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/equalities/contact-us>.



**Our South West Women's committee at a development weekend**