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**Chair’s Blog**

Welcome to this the first edition of “Women’s Word” which contains updates and information on work taking place in the North West. It includes upcoming events, information and campaigns you might want to get involved in, we hope it will serve you as an organising tool.

We’ve been working hard and I’m pleased to welcome Marie, our other Co Chair and Kate back to the committee after periods of ill health.

We celebrated International Women’s Day by holding a very successful event on Women’s Stress and Mental Health with speakers and therapies. The event recognised increased work duties, caring responsibilities and a reduction in supportive service provision as causes for increased workplace stress affecting our mental health and well being. We looked at the issue in a climate of austerity, focussing on women’s safety, Young women and students. We discussed practical ways of dealing with stress. We had some amazing speakers Isabel from MUSU shared some of the successful and innovative ways that this has been tackled in the Student’s Union and told us about “Time to Change” who aim to end mental health discrimination. We talked about how stewards can attempt to recognise signs of deteriorating mental health and behaviours to recognise in order to better deal with and support UNISON members in the workplace. Labour councillor and UNISON member Jane Black outlined what’s involved in becoming a local councillor and Qi Wellness Manchester demonstrated practical ideas on dealing with stress and negative energy and even provided massages to those attending.

We sent a delegation to UNISON’s National Women’s Conference in Brighton, where members debated and heard from speakers from across the UK. We voted on policy for the union on many subjects that matter to women.

We have welcomed some new visitors to the committee and look forward to hearing from anyone else who is interested in our work. We have set up a new dedicated email address for all our correspondence and any enquiries you may have.

See you at the next meeting, best wishes, Liz

Liz Cameron

Co Chair of our North West Regional Women’s Committee

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About this brief

We hope that this briefing will become a regular item for you, it will be sent to Branch Women’s and Equality Officers and contains dates for your diary, campaigns you may be interested in, dates of forthcoming events which you can advertise to your members, items you may wish to add to the agenda of your next branch committee and useful resources and links.

How to use this briefing as an organising tool

We have split the briefing into three convenient sections, **Dates for your Diary**, **Campaigns**, **On the Agenda** and **Useful Resources** all of which can be shared with your members directly or via your branch communications officer. All you need to copy and paste it into an email or your next branch newsletter. Campaigns have current issues you may want to get involved in or tell your members about. On the Agenda are items you may wish to discuss with your branch officers or may seek a discussion and agreement at branch committee. Useful Resources you may wish to adapt for a branch newsletter or website.

**Above: UNISON North West at UNISON Women’s Conference 2017**



**Campaigns**

Something to Share?

If you have anything coming up or any good practice you may wish to share or see included in this briefing please email them to the Chairs of the Committee Liz Cameron and Marie Dolan at [northwest.women@unison.co.uk](mailto:northwest.women@unison.co.uk)

Want to get involved?

If you want to get involved in any of our campaigns or the committee we would more than welcome you just email us if you need any more information [northwest.women@unison.co.uk](mailto:northwest.women@unison.co.uk)



**Made in Dagenham – the musical**

When Saturday 29th April 2017

Where TBC

What TBC

**Greater Manchester Citizens Mayoral Assembly**

When Bank Holiday Monday 1st May 2017 – 2pm-4pm

Where The Lowry Theatre, Salford Quays, Salford

Information This is when Greater Manchester Citizens will put agreed demands to the Mayoral Candidates.  There will be plenty of music, discussion, testimony from workers and service users etc.  GM citizens have pledged to recognise and celebrate the work of public service workers at the event and mayoral candidates will respond to our agreed demands directly to the 1,800 assembled delegates.  Friends and family (including children) are welcome. It is hoped that the No.1 demand from GM Citizens will be full implementation and enforcement of the UNISON Ethical and Residential Charters across Greater Manchester**.** UNISON needs 500 members in attendance from member branches to ensure a packed theatre.  Member branches are entitled to invite whoever they wish – providing they share the aims, values and objectives of your branch.  To register you can do so by following the link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/greater-manchester-citizens-mayoral-assembly-2017-tickets-31835330330?utm_source=eb_email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=order_confirmation_email&utm_term=eventname&ref=eemailordconf> or please email Janet Caulfield [j.caulfield2@unison.co.uk](mailto:j.caulfield2@unison.co.uk) Participants do not need to be branch officers/stewards or delegates.  They can be normal members with an interest in community organising. The 4 Priorities are: Dignity in Social Care (UNISON Care Charters), Living Wage, Affordable Housing and Homelessness and Crime.

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**North West Women’s Committee Meeting**

When Tuesday 9th May 2017

Where Arena Point

What A meeting of women from across all North West UNISON branches and service groups. Women come together as a self organised group to represent member’s views, discuss matters that are important to women members, plan events and activities and share good practice of engaging, encouraging, empowering, inspiring, recruiting and maintaining women in UNISON membership.

Future Meetings TBC

**North West Women’s Conference**

When Saturday 22nd July 2017

Where UNISON North West, Arena Point,

Manchester, M3 1UN

What Women’s safety under a Tory government -

The impact of pay restraint, increased racism, lack of suitable housing, pension inequality, community safety and Brexit. This conference is hosted by the North West Women’s Committee.

Let’s face it, Women are unsafe with the Tories, the impact of their policies has seen women experiencing rising debt, homelessness, beaten vulnerable and unsupported in their workplaces homes and communities. Who cares about this? Who is listening? UNISON will address this in our biennial women’s conference which is your opportunity to be informed, make yourself heard, and gain support from women like you - After all A woman’s place is in her union. This year the aim is to exceed the attendance figures from all previous conferences. There will be speakers and a new addition of a “market place” which will be a space you can browse before conference begins and during the lunch break where there will be relevant organisations and UNISON partners where you can hear about what they can offer you and your members. It proves to be popular this year so make sure you book your place – places are limited.

# Campaigns.jpg

**Campaigns**

**Period Poverty**

The Issue UNISON North West Women have been made aware of an extremely shocking statistic. Women across the UK are in period poverty as they struggle to afford basic sanitary products to give them dignity during their menstrual cycle. Food banks have said that more and more women are requesting sanitary items and that there is a general shortage of donation of these items. Girls and young women have also said that they do not feel able to ask already struggling parents to purchase products and as a result have resorted to using toilet paper, tissue or a sock.

The Hope We hope to make a real difference for these women so that no one has to live in Period Poverty.

The Action We are asking all Women’s Officers to set up a collection point in their workplaces where all staff can easily donate items which in turn local branches can develop local relationships with food banks, homeless shelters and women’s refuges.

Further Info If you are looking to begin a collection make sure you have at least one recipient you can donate to. You can begin contact by following one of the links

Food Bank - <https://nameoffoodbank.foodbank.org.uk> <http://www.homeless.org.uk/homeless-england/search-near-me>.

Homeless & Refuges - <http://www.homeless.org.uk/homeless-england/search-near-me?distance%5Bpostal_code%5D=m34+6au&distance%5Bsearch_distance%5D=5&distance%5Bsearch_units%5D=mile&items_per_page=25&=Go>.

Boots the Chemists are also trailing collection points in stores you can read more by following this link <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/16/boots-support-campaign-end-period-poverty-paula-sherriff-tampons>

# Campaigns.jpg

**Campaigns**

**Safety Pin Campaign**

The Issue UNISON North West Women note the rise in race and hate crime especially since the European Referendum decision. As a response the committee has decided in a show of solidarity with members of our communities be they migrant workers, refugees or those with protected characteristics.

The Hope We hope to make a difference giving a clear message by encouraging all UNISON members to wear a safety pin so that if anyone at any time is in community or using public transport they can easily identify a safe person from the safety pin they wear. No matter how we voted we must not allow a minority to discriminate and make anyone feel threatened.

The Action UNISON North West Women’s Committee have produced cards and pins free of charge to any member. If you would like to distribute pins in your branch and or workplace or if you are at any UNISON events where you would like to distribute pins please contact the committee by emailing [northwest.women@unison.co.uk](mailto:northwest.women@unison.co.uk).

Further Info If you want to know how the safety pin campaign started please follow this link <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/good-news/2016/06/29/safety-pins-used-to-fight-racism-and-show-solidarity-with-immigr/>



**Greater Manchester Citizens**

Greater Manchester Citizens was started in July 2016; work with a variety of institutions across Greater Manchester

Including schools, trade union branches, faith institutions and community groups.

Our current focus is centred on our Mayoral Assembly on May 1st. Communities across Greater Manchester will decide who takes office as the first ever Mayor for our region. S/he will lead decisions on transport, social care, housing, young people, skills and public sector reform which will significantly affect the lives and prospects of people across our communities.

17 UNISON Branches across Greater Manchester have already become partners so they can attend assemblies and vote on the direction of citizens by getting issues important to our members onto the agenda whilst working together with our charities and organisations across Manchester. For more information please email us [northwest.women@unison.co.uk](mailto:northwest.women@unison.co.uk)

# Mary Quaile Club

The Mary Quaile Club was set up in Manchester in December 2013 by trade unionists and labour historians with the aim of holding regular events on working class history and the links with the political issues facing working people in Tory Britain. There is a now project to transcribe the Minutes of the Manchester Women’s Trades Union Council, 1895 to 1919. Mary worked as the Organising Secretary for the MWTUC from 1911 to 1919, and it seems that she took the Minutes with her when the office was shut down. The Minutes are hand-written, cover 760 pages in total, and are the complete record of the meetings of the Council, including both the decisions reached and also often what was said by those attending. Once the project is complete the Minutes will be donated to the Working Class Movement Library. There is an appeal to the trade union movement for funds to pay a professional researcher to transcribe the Minutes and a professional web designer to create the web site. The cost will be £7,000. This request is for branches to consider a donation of between £50 and £100 towards this total. For more information go to <https://maryquaileclub.wordpress.com> or email [maryquaileclub@gmail.com](mailto:maryquaileclub@gmail.com)

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**Child Tax Credit & Universal Credit Changes**

Do you have any members who will be affected by the recent legislative changes to Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit due to come into effect 6 April 2017? Please ask the Officers at your next branch committee or your Welfare Officer if any members are willing to be part of this campaign (remember your must respect members confidentiality) if The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 introduced fundamental changes to Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit, **limiting child tax credit** and **universal credit** to the **first two children in a household**.  These changes, commonly known as the 2 child rule, will come into force from 6 April 2017 together with certain exceptions and transitional arrangements set out in recently published regulations.

Child Poverty Action Group is looking into the possible routes of legal challenge to the 2 child rule and would like your help in locating potential claimants who would be affected by this rule and who would be willing to be part of a CPAG legal challenge.

CPAG is looking in general for:

* Any family already claiming benefits with two children and looking to have more in the near future

But also the following particular types of households which may be unfairly affected by the rule (though this is not an exhaustive list of examples):

* Two lone parent household units already with two children each considering forming a single ‘blended family’ arrangement because the adults have become a couple;
* An individual or couple caring for one or two ‘kinship’ children but contemplating having children of their own;
* A family which, when the children were born, did not require state support but now has a need to because of an unexpected change in circumstances (e.g. loss of a job); and
* A parent who is religiously or philosophically opposed to birth control.

If you can help, please help and encourage members to complete the test case referral form below (save it to your computer first) and email it to us [northwest.women@unison.co.uk](mailto:northwest.women@unison.co.uk) and we will forward it on your behalf.





**TUC women’s gold badge**

The TUC has called for nominations for the TUC women’s gold badge, to be awarded at congress in September. The award is made to a rank and file woman member who is considered to have the best record of trade union and community / voluntary work over a period of years.

* There is no upper age limit but preference will be given to women who are still active in their trade union.
* The award is not related to length of service and should not be regarded as a long service award.
* Women who are or who have been paid officials are not eligible.

If you are interested in making a nomination please email us.  Nominations need to be with National by Monday 24 April 2017 at the latest in order to be considered and approved by D&O at their May meeting.  If you wish to nominate you need information under the following categories:

* Name, length of membership (of UNISON and other unions)
* Current or most recent TU position;
* Their contribution to building UNISON’s organisation, servicing the members or promoting equality;
* Campaigns they have been involved in specifically targeting or relating to women members;
* Their proudest achievement during their involvement in UNISON;
* The contribution to the wider union movement (local, national, international);
* Their contribution to their local community.
* You will also be required to write a testimonial if PDCC agree to nominate your candidate.

There is an application form to complete as part of the formal process, but I am happy to take these details to the committee and fill in the full paperwork once a decision has been made.   If you wish to re-submit a previous nomination which was unsuccessful, please let me know, as I may have details on file.

The 2017 Congress will be held in Brighton from 10-13 September 2017 and nominees must be available to attend to receive the award if successful.

# Useful Resources.jpg

# Getting the Balance Right

A new tool kit, which sets out the rules, gives advice and guidance on how to meet the commitment, engage more women, set up a branch women’s group, and much more.  You can download an electronic copy using this link <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24224.pdf> , hard copies can also be ordered from online publications [www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue) using stock number 3714.

**Women & Pensions**

A new Women and Pensions briefing can be downloaded from the UNISON website at <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/02/24231.pdf> or ordered directly from the UNISON Online Publications, [www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue](http://www.unison.org.uk/onlinecatalogue), stock number 3723.

**Contact Manchester Qi Wellness Centre**

[manchester@qiwellness.org](mailto:manchester@qiwellness.org) 0161 834 5681 and [Isabel.gurbuz@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Isabel.gurbuz@manchester.ac.uk) , [www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk) .

