



The Regional  
Women's Group  
Newsletter for  
the South West

UNISON  
South West

# women's voice

January 2018

## Centenary of the Women's Vote

**February 2018 marks the centenary of the first suffragette victory in the UK.**

Parliament passed an act granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5, and graduates of British universities. And December 2018 will mark 100 years since the first general election in which women voted in the UK. The suffragettes faced opposition from the main political parties, from men who felt women should know their place and from other women who believed politics should be left to their husbands and fathers. Theirs is the story of strength, hope and determination and it didn't end in 1918. Universal suffrage, which saw women win equal voting rights to men, took another ten years.

And 100 years later we are still fighting for equality! From cuts to welfare benefits and women losing their jobs to the treatment of thousands of women born in the 1950s whose pensions are in crisis. In parliament 208 women MPs were elected in the 2017 general election – a record high – but men still outnumber women 2:1. Polls show that in the workplace more than half of women have experienced sexual

harassment. It is more prevalent for younger women and those in precarious forms of work such as zero hours contracts and agency work – precisely those who are much less likely to belong to a trade union.

### Action for you

Whilst we recognise that there is still much to do, it is important for us to mark the struggle of our sisters so far so please consider organising something in your area and/or branch. This could be anything from a showing of Suffragette, to women's conferences, to twitter storms to celebrating SHeroes. Dorset LG Branch are sponsoring a theatre company production 'We Are The Lions – Mr Manager!' at Dorchester Exchange on 16 February followed by a group debate on women's pay, pensions and equalities. Bristol have a full range of programmes including a choir of 100 girls, talks and guided suffragette tours, female graffiti artists and much more.

[http://news.bristol.gov.uk/bristol\\_secures\\_funding\\_to\\_celebrate\\_100\\_years\\_of\\_votes](http://news.bristol.gov.uk/bristol_secures_funding_to_celebrate_100_years_of_votes)

We need to ensure women, and men, know their suffrage history and the relevance of that struggle to tackling harassment, inequality and

discrimination that women and girls still experience today.

**Hayley Kemp,**  
*Plymouth in UNISON  
and Regional Women's  
Committee*



### My first National Women's Committee meeting: Tracy Cunningham

**The meeting was held in UNISON Centre in London in November. The building is amazing; we had a room on the 9th floor with a panoramic view of the London skyline.**

The meeting was well attended and with a packed agenda. We heard reports from all SOGs and the young members' forum and updates from all service group conferences. We split into work groups to discuss motions and fed back to the full committee. National Women's Conference will be held on 1st – 3rd February 2018 in Liverpool. Motions were discussed and a plan of who will be doing what was drawn up – 'meet and greet', chairing a seminar, moving a motion or speaking on a motion. I thoroughly enjoyed my first meeting and look forward to the Conference in 2018.

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# Bristol Zero Tolerance Street Harassment

**Bristol Zero Tolerance is an organisation set up by Bristol women's Commission to raise awareness of street harassment and work with other organisations to improve the city for all.**

According to research by Cornell University and Hollaback, Bristol has the highest rates of Street Harassment in the UK. Avon and Somerset Police is the third force in the UK to officially recognise gender based hate crime and recognise gender as an aggravating factor in hate crime.

I represented UNISON at a 'roundtable' meeting in December. It was a first step



by Bristol Zero Tolerance to see how other organisations can work together to raise awareness.

Around the table were other trade unions, Crown Prosecution Service, the Police, the Council (Public Health, Housing and Deputy Mayor and Head of Neighbourhoods), First Bus, The manager of the Bearpit, St Mungos, SARI and various other stakeholders.

We shared what is happening currently and came up with a plan of action for how we are going to work together to raise awareness including campaign planning, sharing of knowledge, partnership working and setting up a third party reporting system.

The meeting was a great example of collaborative working and UNISON, along with other unions are charged with raising awareness amongst our members.

**Jane Carter,**  
*Branch Secretary, Bristol UNISON*

# Devon and Cornwall Police White Ribbon Appeal



**As a branch representing members working in the Criminal Justice System UNISON Devon and Cornwall Police decided this was an important campaign to promote.**

On 15th November we held a successful White Ribbon day at Police Headquarters, Exeter. The event was well attended by members, police staff and police officers of all levels who actively got involved and signed the petition. We obtained over 100 signatures including the Police and Crime Commissioner and also recruited 12 new members. It was a great day all round raising UNISON's profile amongst members and also senior leaders –

Assistant Chief Netherton even had his legs waxed for charity!

**Jenny Michell,**  
*Devon and Cornwall Police Branch and Regional Women's Committee*

The **White Ribbon Campaign** mobilises men to work together with women to secure change.

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Mytholmroyd, HX7 5DZ

## Expenses Claims for Events and Conferences

**If you want to attend a Conference or training event did you know that all expenses should be paid to you in advance?**

This includes travel, accommodation, childcare and subsistence allowances. This is to ensure that no member is financially disadvantaged by attending an event.

This is particularly important for women members, the majority of whom are in low paid, insecure jobs while also having to juggle caring responsibilities.

The Committee is particularly concerned as we are receiving regular reports from women unable to attend events or financially struggling

because of a delay in payments being made. Branches should be proactively informing anyone attending an event that advance expenses are available. If you are experiencing problems, or your branch does not currently have a system to claim in advance then please contact the Regional Womens Committee for advice and support.

# Refugee Crisis in France

**Last year Conference passed an Emergency Motion highlighting the inhumane living conditions faced by women and children living in the Refugee camp in Dunkirk, France.**

Since passing the motion, the legal camp at Grande Synthe was burnt down, forcing refugees to stay in illegal camps or on the streets where there are no sanitation facilities, or access to clean running water, and only donated tents and tarpaulin for shelter.

Through fundraising and branch donations we raised over £2,500 for the Dunkirk Refugee Women's Centre and have been twice as volunteers.

*"We arrived on the 30th August with a van load of donations. We helped in the distribution warehouse and also arranged activities for the children in the afternoons. Families are living in dire conditions, depending on daily donations of food, shelter, clothing and water just to get through each day. They live in fear of sexual assaults and human traffickers. While we were there the Police evicted some families. Those who didn't have their tents and belongings taken had their possessions damaged and tents slashed.*

*We experienced extreme lows, seeing the appalling conditions the women and children are living in, and the hostility*



*of the French Police towards them. But we also experienced extreme highs, the amazing warm welcome and generosity we received from those living in the camp, seeing the resilience of the children and their families, and being there to join in with the Eid celebrations and a birthday*

*for one of the children in the camp.*

*There are currently over 200 families in Dunkirk and Calais in freezing conditions"*

## How can I help?

You can help by raising money and awareness of the following charities or by arranging donations to be dropped off at various collection points (see websites below). The charities are always looking for volunteers to help in France too!

### **Dunkirk Refugee Womens Centre**

[www.dunkirkrefugeewomenscentre.com](http://www.dunkirkrefugeewomenscentre.com)

### **Care4Calais**

[www.care4calais.org](http://www.care4calais.org)

### **Refugee Community Kitchen**

[www.refugeecommunitykitchen.com](http://www.refugeecommunitykitchen.com)

**Amanda Brown** and **Becky Brookman**,  
Regional Women's Committee and  
Dorset County branch

## Regional Women's Conference, Taunton, October 7th "The Best Yet"

Many women left conference wanting to ensure that their branches included women's campaigns, groups and other activities in their Branch Assessments. We call upon all branches to look at how they can encourage women to fully participate in their union

The new proportionality guide, *Getting the Balance Right* offers lots of advice. Let us all work together to build our union and for it to represent the whole of our membership.

## Mandy's Marathon Supporting Macmillan Cancer

**Mandy, a senior rep at the Bristol Health Branch, was diagnosed with breast cancer earlier in the year. Thankfully she has had surgery and radiotherapy and her strong determined character and her support network have enabled her to "Kick cancer into touch."**

She is raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support and is already in training for the London Marathon. She says she is now taking her "wonky boobs" on a 26 mile run she has never done before.

Our Women's Group "UNWinD" (UNISON Women in Dorset) have been trying to help her on her way by doing some fundraising of our own and by sending her some of the crafts we have done to raise awareness whilst having some Xmas fun.

You can support her by going to her *just giving* page: "Mandy's Macmillan Marathon Page"

## Training

- **Equality Forum** for all branch officers with an equality role –  
*Thursday 22 February 2018*
- **Sex Discrimination Training:**  
*Friday 2 and Saturday 3 March 2018*
- **Branch Officers Training:** including Equality Co-ordinators, LGBT and Women's Officers –  
*Thursday 28 June to Sunday 1 July 2018, Croyde Bay*

# New Regional Women's Committee

With the success of the Regional Conference some women were enthused to join the committee at the AGM (on the same day). Welcome to Kendal Bromley, Alison Buck and Rebecca Staatz – we really look forward to working with you all.

Unfortunately last year both the joint co-ordinators, Laura Hall and Carmela Walker-Bishop, stood down. We miss them both. So at the first Committee meeting in November we had the task of nominating members to the key positions. We are very pleased to announce that **Lesley Discombe and Jenny Michell have taken on the regional joint co-ordinator roles** and Tracy Cunningham joins Becky Brookman representing us on the National Women's committee.



*Becky Brookman, Lesley Discombe, Jenny Michell and Tracy Cunningham*

Stella Crew sadly also decided to step down this year after many years on the Committee. During her time she made a huge contribution notably around the zero hours and austerity campaigns and a working knowledge of issues to do with the Care sector. Despite her own long hours of work and lack of facility time she was always conscientious in her Committee role. Stella also brought an unerring clarity about strong feminist values. All this coupled with her legendary levels of self-deprecation and excessive apologising (and a fantastic sense of humour) meant that Stella was loved and now missed by all.

We have identified a number of priorities for the year and of course there will be more after National Women's Conference. We encourage all Branch Women's officers to promote the centenary of the emancipation of women and also International Women's Day (March 8th). They are both a great opportunity to raise awareness of key campaigning issues such as Women EU workers and Brexit, mental ill-health, sexual health (including pregnancy, menopause, period poverty), sexual harassment, foodbanks, benefits and pensions. All issues are women's issues!

## REGIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

<b>Jacqueline Bonas</b>	Western Energy
<b>Kendal Bromley</b>	Central Bristol Health
<b>Becky Brookman</b>	Dorset County
<b>Amanda Brown</b>	Dorset County
<b>Alison Buck</b>	Devon County
<b>Tracy Cunningham</b>	Devon and Cornwall Police
<b>Lesley Discombe</b>	Torbay Local Government
<b>Sharon Foster</b>	Bristol Local Government
<b>Lyn Gardiner</b>	Bath Health
<b>Hayley Kemp</b>	Plymouth in UNISON
<b>Melinda Manickam</b>	Somerset County
<b>Jenny Michell</b>	Devon and Cornwall Police
<b>Rebecca Staatz</b>	University of Bristol
<b>Michelle Goodman</b>	NEC
<b>Kris Black</b>	NEC

If you would like to join the committee or be added to our email network please contact us.

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### DATE FOR YOUR CALENDAR

## REGIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2018

28 to 30 September  
Croyde Bay



### Committee's Facebook Page

This is a closed group so if you would like to join then just click on the request button on the page 'UNISON Women In The South West'.