

Report of the TUC Women's Committee 2023- 2024

Remembering a great sister

Jane Loftus was an outspoken, working class woman.

Jane, was the national president of the Communication Workers' Union (CWU). Jane was a member of the union since 1982, a longstanding socialist, militant Royal Mail rep, and chaired the union's postal executive. As well as holding long standing positions on the TUC general Council and Women's Committee

Jane, will be missed by all including TUC Women's Committee but her fighting spirit will live on in the comrades she has inspired

Contents

TUC Women’s Committee 2023-2024.....	4
Congress 2023	7
Equality Campaign plan	9
Defending the right to strike.....	10
Committee work 2023-2024.....	11
Tackling all forms of violence against women and girls.....	11
Addressing the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on women.....	13
Organising women in the workplace.....	15
Women’s health and the workplace.....	16
Solidarity with women and girls globally.....	16
Women’s Council of Isles 2023	18

Section One

TUC Women's Committee 2023-2024

Members elected to serve on the TUC Women's Committee at the 2023 Women's Conference were as follows:

Section A – General Seat

Deborah Reay (ASLEF)

Sian Caulfield (CSP)

Jean Sharrocks (CWU)

Jean Rogers (EQUITY)

Davina Brown (GMB)

Hailey Willington (MU)

Kat Lord Watson (NASUWT)

Mairead Canavan (NEU)

Jackie Marshall (POA)

Jackie Green (PCS)

Sophie Flood (RMT)

Joanna De Groot (UCU)

Margaret McKee (UNISON)

Alison Spencer-Scragg (UNITE)

Section B – Black Women Seats

Ajaz Aslam (NASUWT)

Patricia Davies (UNITE)

Davena Rankin (UNISON)

Sujata Patel (USDAW)

Section C – Disabled Women Seat

Sharon Therese Calvert (NASUWT)

Section D – LGBT+ Seat

Bridget Corcoran (PCS)

Section E – Young Worker Seat

This seat was not filled through election at conference. Ellie Anderson (Community) was subsequently co-opted into the seat by the committee at the first committee meeting of the new cycle in October 2023.

General Council Members

The General Council has been represented on the committee during the year by:

Annette Mansell-Green (BDA)

Sarah Woolley (BFAWU)

Claire Sullivan (CSP)

Maria Exall (CWU)

Jane Loftus (CWU)^{***}

Andrea Bradley (EIS)

Farzana Jumma (GMB)

Barabara Plant (GMB)

Naomi Pohl (MU)

Michelle Codrington-Rogers (NASUWT)

Mary Bousted (NEU)*

Heather McKenzie (NEU)*

Louise Reagan (NEU)**

Niamh Sweeney (NEU)**

Janet Farrar (UCU)*

Jo Grady (UCU)*

Andrea Egan (UNISON)*

Christina McAnea (UNISON)

Gloria Mills (UNISON)

Julia Mwaluke (UNISON)

Amerit Rait (UNISON)*

Liz Snape (UNISON)

Gail Cartmail (UNITE)*

Sarah Carpenter (UNITE)**

Angela Duerden (UNITE)**

Sharon Graham (UNITE)

Diana Holland (UNITE)*

Susan Matthews (UNITE)

Maggie Ryan (UNITE)

Jane Stewart (UNITE)*

Joanne Cairns (USDAW)

*Denotes members of the committee until Congress 2023

** Denotes joined the committee following Congress 2023

***Jane Loftus sadly passed away in November 2023

Chair and Vice-Chair

At the first meeting of the new Committee cycle Annette Mansell-Green (General Council and BDA) was re-elected as Chair of the Committee and Susan Matthews (General Council and UNITE) was re-elected as Vice-Chair.

Section Two

Congress 2023

This year's congress was held in Liverpool between Sunday 10th and Wednesday 13th September and was chaired by TUC President for 2022-2023 and TUC Women's committee member and LGBT+ committee chair Maria Exall.

The programme of business covered:

- Winning a better future for working people.
- The economy and the cost-of-living crisis.
- Building a stronger more diverse movement.
- Industrial action and protecting our rights.

If you would like to access any of the motions debated at Congress or any recordings of congress proceedings, please use the Congress Homepage [TUC Congress 2023 | TUC](#).

General Council Report 2023

The General Council Report highlighting the work of the General Council in the 2022-2023 cycle can be found [here](#).

TUC Womens Conference motion to Congress 2023

The motion selected by sisters at Women's Conference 2023 to go to TUC Congress 2023 was '*More work needed to tackle and prevent sexual harassment in our movement and in workplaces*'. The full text of this motion can be found in the appendix to this report.

Other Congress motions

Noting that all motions passed at Congress will impact women, below are a list of motions particularly relevant to the ongoing work by the TUC Women's Committee.

31 – Equal work, voice and pay

C12 – Tackling violence, harassment and sexual harassment in all workplaces

37 – Equal conditions for female professional footballers

C07 – Secure affordable housing for all workers

C08 – Social Security

C09 – Ending child poverty

C11 – The Covid-19 public inquiry

55 – Making midwifery a career accessible for all

63 – Childcare: delivering just and prosperous society

06 – Tackling one-sided flexibility

C14 – Investing fair funding for public services.

Congress Speaker information

107 women spoke in congress debates.

117 men spoke in congress debates.

The motion debates on tackling violence and harassment and sexual harassment had the most speakers of any debate.

11 women spoke and 1 man.

Section three

Equality Campaign plan

The TUC in consultation with the equality committees updated its equality campaign plan. The campaign plan supports and enhances the specific priorities and campaigns of our member unions in their industrial sectors.

The primary purpose of the campaign plan is to view the main TUC campaigning priorities through the lens of equality. The 2023/24 equality campaign plan is an opportunity to communicate the headline equality priorities for the TUC and provides an overarching narrative for the work that we do to challenge inequality in the workplace, in society and across the movement. This plan covers our work on Black workers, women, disabled workers, young workers and LGBT+ workers.

This plan sets out the main themes as prioritised by our equality structures, in the context of the key priority areas identified by the TUC general secretary.

The priorities set out in the 2023/24 equalities campaign plan are as follows:

Priority one - Supporting unions and members through the cost-of-living crisis.

Priority two - Defending our employment rights including the right to strike.

Priority three - Secure real political change.

Priority four – Build and diversify our movement.

Section four

Defending the right to strike

The TUC recognises that our right to strike is key to securing pay rises across the economy and has continued to prioritise our fight against the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill in 2023. Just before Conference last year, the TUC held Protect the Right to Strike Day, on 1 February 2023. On the day, trade union members ran events all over the country and there was a petition hand in with more than 280,000 signatures. We ran a high-profile media campaign, including a partnership with the Daily Mirror. We briefed journalists to combat the government's spin and achieved more than 250 national print and broadcast mentions.

When the Strikes Bill came to the House of Lords, we ran an innovative campaign to get individual union members affected by the Bill to write physical letters to individual peers. This increased crossbench attendance and helped contribute to multiple government defeats on amendments in the Lords stages.

When the Bill returned to the House of Commons, we organised an emergency Protect the Right to Strike rally on 22 May 2023, compared by Quincy Raymond, Chair of the Young Workers Forum, at which the Labour Party repeated its commitment to repeal the legislation.

However, the Bill reached royal assent in July 2023, but the union movement continued our campaign. The TUC worked with affiliates to respond to consultations related to the Act and co-ordinated a [joint statement](#) from business, unions and civil society groups in the EU and UK in criticism of the legislation.

On 9 December 2023, we held an historic Special Congress to agree to continue our campaign of opposition and non-compliance - across workplaces and across the country. The [General Council statement](#) sets out the plan for the future. Ahead of Congress [metro mayors and council leaders](#) pledged to work with trades unions and employers to explore every possible option to avert any prospect of work notices being issued in our areas.

On 17 January we held a webinar for union reps on what they need to know about Minimum Service Levels and on 27 January we joined protestors for a rally in Cheltenham to celebrate the union members who opposed Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government attacks on trade union rights at GCHQ and to continue our fight to protect the right to strike.

The TUC has also continued to support co-ordinated strike action amongst affiliates and expanded the offer of our Solidarity Hub. The hub provides a Dispute Intelligence database, online learning for reps on taking industrial action, solidarity stories capturing first hand testimony of union winning for workers and via the hub we have organised roundtables to reflect on and draw best practice from recent strike action.

Section five

Committee work 2023-2024

Below is a summary of the work of the TUC supported by the women's committee in line with priorities identified at TUC Women's Conference 2023.

Tackling all forms of violence against women and girls

Our work to tackle and prevent sexual harassment in workplaces and in our movement continues.

Following many months of uncertainty, the [Worker Protection Bill](#) (preventative duty) finally received Royal Assent in October 2023 and will come into effect from October 2024. The new legislation will require employers to take reasonable steps to *prevent* sexual harassment of their employees. By taking a more proactive approach the intention of the duty is to help shift the onus from victim-survivors onto employers to challenge the workplace cultures that enable sexual harassment and make their workplaces safer through a risk-based approach, supported by good policy and practice and safe reporting routes.

The campaign for the preventative duty was started in 2019 by the TUC and affiliates through the [#Thisisnotworking alliance](#) and the TUC has continued to campaign and work with stakeholders to ensure this important change in legislation happened. Previous ground-breaking research from the TUC has highlighted the extent of workplace sexual harassment for [women](#) in general, [disabled women](#), [young workers](#) and [LGBT+ workers](#).

In May 2023 we updated some of our research on women's experiences of sexual harassment to keep pressure on the government to pass the legislation. Our new research found that [3 in 5 women have experienced sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse](#) at work, rising to 2 in 3 for women aged 25-34. For most women, these weren't isolated incidences and for 2 in 5 the perpetrator was a third party like a customer of client, rather than a colleague.

While we were frustrated and extremely disappointed that the government backtracked on its original commitment to introduce protections from third party harassment as well, it is a positive step to have won this hard fought for change in the law.

But there is still much more to be done and in the coming year we will prioritize work to win third-party protections, end the misuse of NDAs and deliver on our commitment

to ensure Black women's voices and experiences shape the discussion and solutions to tackling workplace sexual harassment through further research that is much needed and has been sorely lacking. This is being led by the Black Women's Advisory Group, which has commissioned research, hosted a webinar and will be conducting further focus groups to hear from Black women across the movement.

The TUC was also invited by the Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union (BAFU) to give evidence alongside them to the [Business and Trade Select Committee](#) in November 2023 regarding [investigations into McDonalds](#) and the awful culture that has seen many workers, but particularly young women experience bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

Our work to ensure that the trade union movement is also a safe place for staff and members continues.

Following a [report published in October 2022](#) by the TUC Executive Working Group, established in 2021 to help support the movement to tackle and prevent sexual harassment in our structures, the TUC focused on developing and piloting new training to support leaders of the movement in tackling sexual harassment and building preventative cultures.

We recruited 12 brilliant trainers from across the movement who have piloted sessions with several affiliates and the TUC throughout 2023.

The training focuses on:

- Why leadership is important for addressing and challenging cultures that enable sexual harassment.
- Knowledge base: legal and theoretical definitions of sexual harassment in the workplace - how sexual harassment is related to power and to violence against women; through an intersectional lens.
- Understanding: thinking about barriers to reporting; looking at the psychology of perpetrators and those subjected to sexual harassment; concepts of 'justice'; the collegiate workplaces and movements and victim-blaming; how do we change organisational cultures.
- Practical leadership skills, actions and practices: thinking about handling disclosures, climate surveys, data, policy and procedures.

The pilot is being independently evaluated by the Child and Women's Abuse Studies Unit at London Metropolitan University, led by Dr Sukhwant Dhaliwal and Dr Fiona Vera Gray.

Following the development and piloting of the training the EC Working Group was reconvened in November 2023 to take forward other recommendations from their report, the Women's Conference 2023 and the Women's Conference motion to Congress 2023. The group will continue to meet regularly this year to take forward actions including developing a statement of commitment for Trade Unions to commit

to, developing a tracker to help facilitate oversight and progress towards tackling and preventing sexual harassment and supporting further roll out of training to the movement.

Following women's conference 2023, the TUC has begun the work to scope out a model for confidential reporting for trade union staff and members. The TUC has worked with our governance structures to develop a project specification and has/will go out to tender in the summer. Following a successful tender process we intend to go live in the autumn.

Our TU Education team have delivered a webinar for reps in April 2023 - '*Supporting domestic abuse survivors at work through economic abuse*'. And at our UnionReps Connect event in November 2023 TU Education worked with the National Centre for Domestic Violence to deliver a reps workshop on domestic violence as a workplace issue.

Addressing the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on women

The cost-of-living crisis is another crisis that women are at the sharp end of. Like the pandemic and over a decade of austerity, it is exacerbating the existing structural inequalities women face, leaving them less insulated from its impacts. This risks not only stifling any progress towards women's economic and social equality but sending it into reverse.

Over 2023, supported by the committee the TUC has campaigned on a range of issues to address the structural inequalities that leave women more vulnerable to economic shocks.

Since the launch of TUC report in 2022 '[Raising pay for everyone: A plan for a high wage economy and a £15 minimum wage](#)', the TUC has continued to campaign for £15 per hour minimum wage for everyone and for youth rates in minimum wage legislation to be abolished. Our evidence to the Low Pay Commission called on the government to set out a plan to reach a £15 minimum wage and for the National Living Wage to be extended to all workers including apprentices. The TUC continues to contribute to the work of the Living Wage Foundation, promoting the voluntary living wage as a minimum rate for the lowest-paid workers, who are disproportionately more likely to be women.

At TUC Women's Conference 2023, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that former TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady would be leading a [review](#) of how to close the gender pay gap. The TUC has facilitated this work through participation in roundtable and submitting evidence, research, and good practice into the review.

The TUC also made a series of interventions on our [Equal Pay Day \(February 21st 2024\)](#) which marks the point at which women start getting paid in comparison to men. The gender pay gap currently stands at 14.3 per cent, and at current rates will take over two

decades to close. But we know that the pay gap is wider in some sectors, varies by age and compounds for disabled women, where the [pay gap is 30 per cent](#).

As set out in our [Equal Pay Day briefing](#), we continue to call for mandatory actions plans, extending reporting requirements to organisations with 50 or more employees and extending reporting to disability and ethnicity.

In May 2023 we used the [Gender Pensions Gap Day](#), a day established by the TUC and Prospect to highlight the significant inequality women face in pension income. [The gender pension gap](#) is now at 40.5 per cent, more than double the pay gap and an increase on the previous year. The current pension gap means that women effectively go 5 months without a pension income in comparison to men. The TUC is calling for a range of measures to tackle the pensions gap including changes in three main areas:

- Better reporting to understand and highlight the problem.
- Addressing the pay and employment gaps that are the root cause of pension disparities, by improving childcare and social care, extending shared parental leave, and strengthening rights to work flexibly.
- Making the occupational pension system work better for people on low pay so that inequalities in working life are not replicated or magnified in retirement.

We know that the crises facing the childcare and early years sector is having a disproportionate impact on women. When families do not have access to affordable childcare and early years education it is typically women who are forced leave the labour market or reduce their hours. Our research highlighted that women [are 7 times more likely to be out of the labour market](#) due to caring responsibilities and this rises to [12 times more likely for BME women](#). And we know the childcare and early years workforce, which is underpaid and under-valued, is made up of predominantly young women workers.

We have continued to highlight these issues and helped to establish the Early Years and Childcare Coalition, working with affiliates and stakeholders to campaign for commitments to rescue and reform the childcare and early years sector. The TUC also sits on the coalition steering group. We have also submitted evidence to the review of Childcare and Early Years being carried out by the Labour Party, led by Sir David Bell.

Recognising the parallels between the crises facing social care and the childcare and early years sector and the disproportionate impact this has on women, the TUC launched its '[Strategy for the Care Workforce](#)' in August 2023, setting out the building blocks for a new deal for workers in those sectors that will lay the foundations for high quality care and education. Our core asks focus on:

1. Worker voices heard and valued.
2. Decent pay and conditions for all care workers.
3. Skills, training, and progression pathways.
4. Health, safety, and wellbeing.

All of this must be under-pinned by long-term funding and a commitment to public provision.

The TUC was invited to submit evidence to the Women and Equalities Select Committee call for evidence on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on women – our submission can be found [here](#). Our submission highlighted a range of areas from low pay, insecure work and Universal Credit to caring responsibilities that must be tackled to ensure that the structural inequalities faced by women are addressed. The TUC also gave oral evidence to the committee in January 2024.

Organising women in the workplace

Alongside our continued work on addressing low pay, pay and pension gaps and our care workforce strategy, we have continued to campaign and support organising around a range of workplace rights that disproportionately impact women.

Several Private Members Bills that will have a significant impact on women received royal assent in 2023. The TUC has played a key role in supporting these bills alongside other stakeholders, advising on how they can be implemented and continuing to campaign for reforms to go further.

The employment relations (flexible working) Act 2023 which comes into effect in April 2024, will give all employees the day one right to request flexible working. While this [bill is not everything we wanted](#), it does lay the foundation for future progress. We submitted responses to the [ACAS consultation](#) on the draft statutory code of practice that will accompany the new legislation and the [government consultation](#) on on-statutory flexible working. The TUC continues to campaign for a day one right to flexible working and for an advertising duty so that employers must advertise all jobs as flexible upfront.

Other bills which also received Royal Assent in 2023:

- The Carers Leave Act (2023) giving a statutory entitlement to 5 days unpaid carers leave.
- The Neonatal Care (leave and pay) Act (2023) giving a day one statutory entitlement to 12 weeks additional paid leave for parents with babies who are born prematurely and in need of neonatal care.
- Protection From Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Act giving parents returning from maternity, parental or adoption leave extended protections from redundancy.

Our TUC Education team also ran a pilot of a new flexible version of our flagship reps training – Union Reps Stage 1. Over 50 percent of participants were women. The team will continue to offer this course flexibly to support more women being able to access the training.

The TUC and affiliates also launched the Our Work Matters campaign in 2023, working with outsourced workers who are disproportionately more likely to be women and

BME, to campaign for better pay and conditions. You can learn more about the campaign [here](#).

Women's health and the workplace

We continue to campaign on women's health in the workplace. The TUC was invited to sit on the Menopause Stakeholder Reference Group set up by the EHRC to support them on guidance they are developing for employers on good practice to support women in the workplace during menopause.

TUC Education ran a webinar in March 2023 '*Creating menopause friendly space at work*' a recording of the session can be found [here](#).

For the first time, the TUC ran women-only introductory courses on the role of health and safety rep, reaching more than 150 women, and helping provide information and confidence to enable them to stand for the position in their branch.

The TUC worked with unions to raise awareness of the gendered impacts of asbestos exposure, for example, the higher rate of asbestos cancers among women in the teaching profession and helped to get Johnson & Johnson talcum powder (implicated in hundreds of cases of ovarian cancer) removed from the shelves in Britain.

[New TUC analysis](#) of statutory sick pay data showed that 1.3 million workers miss out on sick pay and that women are more than twice as likely as men to not qualify for statutory sick pay. We continue to campaign for the minimum earnings threshold to qualify for sick pay to be removed and for the basic rate of statutory sick pay to be increased to match real living wage levels.

Solidarity with women and girls globally

The committee has continued to support the TUC international team in its work to build international solidarity with workers, and particularly work to support women and girls globally.

The TUC raised concerns about increased gender inequalities that could be caused by a UK-India trade deal. Our joint statement with Indian trade unions calling for talks to halt can be found [here](#).

The TUC also raised concerns about gender discrimination in the Gulf States as one of the reasons the UK government should halt trade talks with them.

Turkey remain one of the TUC priority countries and we continue to work with trade unions in Turkey to address worker and human rights abuses. The TUC raised concerns about violence against women in Turkey in our submission to the Dept of Business and Trade consultation on plans to negotiate a new UK-Turkey trade deal. The TUC and our Turkish sister trade union centres KESK and DISK are calling for the UK government to

not enter these trade talks while abuses of workers' and human rights continue in Turkey.

With regard to our ongoing work on one of our priority countries – Palestine, we continue to offer solidarity and support to workers and unions in the region and allied NGOs, and we have continued to lobby an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and end to the siege. We have also called on affiliates to support the [Medical Aid for Palestinians Gaza Emergency Appeal](#).

In April 2023 we wrote to the Minister for North Africa and the Middle East regarding the deteriorating situation in Palestine. In May 2023 we presented at a European Trade Union Confederation Fringe on Palestine in Berlin organised by the European Trade Union Network. In October the [TUC issued a statement](#) condemning the escalating violence against civilians and calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and release of all hostages. This was supported by a [statement from the TUC General Council](#).

The TUC hosted an event for General Council members in January 2024 with the Palestinian Ambassador, Exec Secretary of the Arab Trade Union Confederation - Dr Hind Benammar, and representatives from B'Tselem and Institute of Race Relations.

We have also met with FCDO setting out our position on an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of all hostages as well as ending arms sales and military collaboration and insisting Israel complies with the ICJ provisional measures. We [wrote to Secretary of State Lord Cameron](#) stressing our position. We have also met with Wayne David, Shadow Minister for the Middle East stressing our calls.

Women's Council of Isles 2023

Every year committee members from the TUC, Wales TUC, STUC*, ICTU* and ICTUNI*¹ come together to share priority campaigns and build solidarity across the Isles. This year the Council of Isles was hosted by Wales TUC in Llandudno across 18th to 20th October.

The main theme of the council of isles this year was recognising and valuing paid and unpaid care work. Over the two days committee members heard from trade union women about their experiences of paid and unpaid care and the impact it had had on their lives, as well as campaigns unions were leading to tackle these issues including collective bargaining in care sectors and carers passports.

Committee members from across the isles also updated on campaigns and work being done to tackle sexual harassment at work and in our movement, and we also heard from women who have participated in the [Wales TUC Black Activist Development Program](#).

¹ *** STUC = Scottish TUC, ICTU = Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ICTUNI = Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Irish Committee