

THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY continued

PROCUREMENT

The Government has chosen to not impose specific duties on public authorities in respect of its public procurement functions. But this does not preclude progressive public bodies from including this in their equality objectives.

THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS

- Ensure representatives and persons covered by the protected characteristics are involved in the development of equality objectives at the beginning of the process and remain engaged in the process. Equality outcome objectives should be clear, strategic and reflect organisational priorities that cover employees and service delivery.
- Ensure that representatives register an early interest and request to be formally consulted as a key stakeholder on the equality objectives.
- Ensure that the process of gathering information is robust and relevant to the equality objectives and to groups and members covered by the protected characteristics.

- Discuss with public bodies the development of clear, specific, relevant and measurable equality outcome objectives.
- Ensure that equality objectives cover all areas of employment, including restructuring, reorganisation and redundancies, as well as the impact of commissioning, outsourcing and privatisation of services.
- Engage in the design, planning, development and delivery of services.
- Assess the functions and policies of public bodies relevant to their performance of the public duty.
- Ensure that staff are trained in connection with the equality duties.
- Ensure that public authorities are complying with the general and specific equalities duties where they apply.

An article by **Gloria Mills, UNISON's National Secretary Equalities**, for Equal Opportunities Review can be accessed by [http://www.eordirect.co.uk/default.aspx?id=1134810&printview=1\[12/11/2010](http://www.eordirect.co.uk/default.aspx?id=1134810&printview=1[12/11/2010).



"The Centenary of International Women's Day is an opportunity to reflect on the changes that women have experienced through the last one hundred years. Substantial progress has been made. The baton is now being passed to us to defend those gains. Since last year's General Election we have seen an unprecedented attack on women and their families and the most vulnerable in our society by this Tory led Coalition Government. This is being replicated across the globe. The public sector and the service it provides is being made the scapegoat for the Bankers' greed, and those taking the hardest hit are women. So in 2011 let women unite as they did in 1911 to defend the rights of women and for social justice."

Clare Williams, Regional Convenor

Northern Region Women's Network

Celebrating

**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
8 MARCH 2011 CENTENARY
Newsletter 2011**



Northern Region Delegates at UNISON's National Women's Conference 2011 at Harrogate with Dave Prentis, General Secretary
Photograph by Sam Atkins

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The origins of International Women's Day lie deep within the struggle of working class women to form trade unions and the fight for women's suffrage. These two issues united European and American women. In 1908 hundreds of women workers in the New York needle trades demonstrated in Rutgers Square in Manhattan's Lower East Side to form their own union to demand the right to vote. This historic demonstration took place on 8 March. It led in the following year to the uprising of 30,000 women in the shirtwaist makers which resulted in the first permanent trade union for women workers in the USA.

These actions inspired European socialist women who had established the International Socialist Women's Conference on the initiative of the German socialist feminist Clara Zetkin (1857-1933). In 1910 the Women's Conference carried a motion to hold a Women's Day on 8 March. In 1975 the United Nations recognised 8 March as International Women's Day to celebrate women's achievements and to demonstrate international solidarity with women everywhere and the ongoing struggle for women's rights.

**Tuesday 8 MARCH NTUC EVENT
SPONSORED BY UNISON**

BEARING THE LOAD

The impact of spending cuts on women
Mozart Suite, The Thistle Hotel,
Newcastle
5.00 pm – 7.00 pm
to register contact the NTUC on
0191 232 3175 or
email: cfarrar@tuc.org.uk



**"Many as one and
Shoulder to shoulder"**

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NORTHERN REGION
WOMEN'S NETWORK

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The Regional Women's Network submitted 2 motions to National Women's Conference which this year was held in Harrogate. 40 delegates from the Region attended. Our two motions were "Women and the Cuts" and "Welfare Reform and the Impact on UNISON Women." We also submitted 2 emergency motions "Universal Credit: Welfare that Works" and "A Million Women March". All of the motions were carried as were Newcastle City's motions on "Sure Start" and "The Price of Motherhood".



Linda Hobson, Branch Secretary, Newcastle Hospital Branch said, "I was honoured to be the Regional Delegate to this year's National Women's Conference. There was a real buzz throughout the conference. As Regional Delegate I moved the Network's motions. It was very

Linda Hobson Regional Delegate to National Women's Conference

emotional for me to move the motion on Women and the Cuts as I spoke about three generations of women in my family and the progress that has been made. I was the first member of my family to get A levels and go to university. As a staff nurse I see what is happening to the NHS and it really is worrying. I want my children to do even better than me. As women we are going to face a hard battle. I was delighted that both the Network motion on Women and the Cuts and Newcastle City motion on Sure Start are going from Women's to National Delegate Conference in June.



Saturday 26 March will see thousands descend on London for a national march and rally in response to the unfair and unnecessary spending cuts being imposed by the Tory lead Coalition Government.

Pat Heron, Chair of the Regional Women's Network said, "I will be proud to be marching in defence of the public sector and with the Women's Network Banner. Women are at the forefront of the cuts that this Tory led Government are imposing. With 46% of working



....women in the North East working in the public sector, the cuts agenda will have a huge impact on women's employment in the Region. Link this to the reform of the welfare system that the Government is imposing and the picture is very bleak. But women in the north east are renowned for our resilience and UNISON women in particular are sure to make our voices heard."

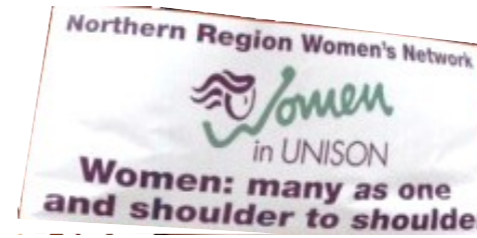


Women in UNISON are taking a leading role in the Public Services Alliance at its meetings throughout the Region. **Clare Williams, Regional Convenor**, is the Chair of the Regional PSA. UNISON women are actively involved in working in their communities to raise awareness of the impact of service delivery cuts.

Get active – get involved with your local PSA

NORTHERN REGION WOMEN'S NETWORK BANNER

The Women's Network launched its Banner at



National Women's Conference in February.

The Banner uses words taken from the poem by Dame Ethel Smyth 'The March of the Women' which was set to music as the suffragette anthem.

The words on the Banner read "Women: Many as One and Shoulder to Shoulder". The Banner has already been at some of the rallies of local councils and is available to branches by booking through **Ruth Berkley, Regional Women's Office** email r.berkley@unison.co.uk.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The revised Public Sector Equality Duty which has been extended under the Equality Act 2010 will come into force on 1 April. The new equality duty will replace the existing race, gender and disability duties and extend it to cover age, religious belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity (protected characteristics).

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a general equality duty on certain public authorities and others that exercise public functions (full details of the public bodies covered are contained in Section 19 of the Act.)

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....Public bodies required to comply with the general equality duty will have to:

- publish information relating to its performance of the general equality duty under s.149(1) of the Equality Act 2010, at least annually, and review them at least every four years.
- include information relating to the protected characteristics of its employees, if the public authority has 150 employees or more; and
- assess the impact of its policies and practices and the likely impact of its proposed policies and practices on the furtherance of the aims set out in paragraphs (a) to (c) of s.149(1).

The new equality duty moves from a "rights based" approach to an "information-based" approach.

This is a fundamental change for trade unions and groups representing gender, race and disability, who had the right as stakeholders to be consulted which is being replaced by the requirement to publish information about any engagement with people that the public body considers have an interest in furtherance of the general equality duty.

There is a danger that this will seriously dilute the previous provisions and will remove the active engagement with stakeholders particularly from the early stages of the policy development and decision-making process.

TRANSPARENCY

Under the existing provisions public authorities had to publish an equality plan setting out the steps they propose to take to deliver their equality objectives. From 1 April the emphasis for public authorities is now for a shift to transparency. There is a danger that this will make equalities no longer mainstream but a marginal non-core function. It is important that public authorities still deliver robust equality outcome objectives.

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