

## Hazards Conference 2018

From menstruation to menopause! Why do we need a gender sensitive approach to occupational safety and health

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### Why do we need to take a gender-sensitive approach to occupational safety and health?

- Five reasons
  - Sex and gender differences
  - Hidden hazards
  - Lack of focus on women's occupational ill health in research
  - The "male standard" – PPE, workwear work equipment,
  - Double burden (risks at work and at home)

### Making the invisible visible – what are trade unions doing?

Examples of trade union action putting women's health and safety in the spotlight:

- TUC/Prospect – women's PPE survey
- TUC *Still just a bit of banter?* sexual harassment survey
- TUC Gender and occupational safety and health (GOSH) resources
- ETUC *Safe at Home, Safe at Work report* (trade union action on tackling gender-based violence – including domestic violence)
- Wales TUC menopause tool box
- Trade union evidence to Women and Equalities select committee inquiries into pregnancy and maternity discrimination and discriminatory dress codes and high heels
- Hazards Campaign – challenging research on breast cancer and night work and focus on lifestyle rather than occupational causes (Don't Pink Me)

### What next? Threats and opportunities

- Are things getting worse?
  - Occupational segregation very slow to change (apprenticeships/women freight drivers)
  - Slow progress on women's PPE (TUC and Prospect)
  - Sexual harassment – 2016 TUC survey found that over half of all women (52%) had experienced sexual harassment at work but that figure rose to 63% of young women
  - Pregnancy and maternity discrimination inquiry found that pregnant women and mothers report more discrimination and poor treatment at work now than they did a decade ago
  - Women are still being required to wear high heels for work
  - Brexit – the health and safety protections we do have are under threat
  - Union workplaces are safer workplaces, but union membership has fallen to lowest level since 1995

## Opportunities – what more can women trade unionists do?

- Sexual harassment is all over the news and that gives us an opportunity to tackle it in our workplaces. How can we use #MeToo?
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations – proportion of women safety reps is around 28% compared with 47% of the workforce
- Better than Zero (STUC), Hungry for Justice (BFAWU), Picturehouse strike (BECTU), Not on the menu (Unite) – organising around health and safety in unorganised sectors so future generations of women workers are safer and healthier
- Striking women – learning lessons from Grunwick to Gate Gourmet

Questions and comments?