

GMB

U N I O N

CONGRESS 2022
CEC SPECIAL REPORT
ON THE WOMEN'S
CAMPAIGN UNIT

**MAKE
WORK
BETTER**

CONGRESS 2022

CEC SPECIAL REPORT ON THE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN UNIT

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Report Summary

- GMB is committing to a renewed focus on making work better for women
- The Women's Campaign Unit has been established to spearhead campaigning over Equal Pay and working conditions for women
- Women's work is made better through focused collective campaigning in the workplace
- Positive change has always been made by the campaigns of women trade unionists
- Our Equal Pay campaigns seek to rectify historic injustices and providing long lasting institutional knowledge on the law and how we campaign
- The negative health conditions and injuries that women sustain at work are under reported and under compensated
- The Care Sector is a prime example of where women hold the majority of roles yet remains a poorly paid and undervalued workforce. Improving pay in the sector is a central priority for GMB.

Policy Commitments

- Building institutional knowledge of Equal Pay campaigns through the Women's Campaign Unit and our GMB activists
- Organising claims based on improving the long-term health of women in the workplace
- Build up our own research through member engagement on the conditions of workplaces which affect the health of women
- Health and safety training which includes specific training on IIDB to increase awareness of the benefit.
- Campaign for reform through Department of Work and Pensions (Scotland as an example of reform through SEIAC Bill).
- Adopting £15 per hour as the minimum demand for the Care Sector

Introduction

The work of the GMB Women's Campaign Unit will form a core part of the union's industrial work over the coming years. While it might be obvious to many, the CEC believes it is important that we set out why it is necessary for GMB to have dedicated resources to improve the working conditions of women.

GMB and the CEC recognise that;

- women are underpaid
- the work that women occupy in the majority is undervalued
- opportunities for women in the workplace can be held back because of poor policies
- women continue to carry out the majority of domestic duties in households and childcare
- the jobs that women occupy are normally the most at risk and insecure
- we must take an intersectional approach to our campaigning, and that equality is at the core of our work
- through dedicated organising and campaigning, women have secured historic and far-reaching changes to working conditions affecting legislative changes and new employment law

This report will highlight key figures around the gender pay gap and the problems with reporting in general, as well as other important facts about the state of the pay and working conditions of women.

GMB has, within our history, the foundations of the women's trade union movement. Without trade union organised women workers, there would be no Equal Pay Act. This report will explore the history of women campaigning for pay and conditions with a focus on the Matchstick Girls' Strike of 1888, the Chainmakers' Strike of 1910, the Grunwick Dispute of 1976, and the landmark Equal Pay case that GMWU (GMB) member Julie Hayward won against Cammell Laird in 1988.

With our renewed focus on equal pay, GMB has started making new history with GMB organising the largest equal pay strike in UK history (Glasgow 2018). The report will detail a range of recent and ongoing equal pay campaigns, including Glasgow.

The Women's Campaign Unit will be essential in developing the organising strategies around Equal Pay campaigns and improving the work of women.

We also have a responsibility to improve the conditions for women to work in industries which remain dominated by men.

GMB has been working within sectors such as engineering and construction to make its associated industries more accessible and sustainable for women to work in.

This report will also explore the underreporting of industrial injuries that women suffer from. There is much work to be done on researching and recognising that injuries can be developed over time in workplaces that might not be as obviously hazardous, but do have detrimental effects on health.

Finally, this report will make the case for at least a £15 per hour wage for workers in the care sector. Following the campaign started by GMB Scotland in 2021 we will make the case to expand the campaign throughout the UK. The work of our members in the care sector is chronically undervalued, and we must be committed to making work better for the people who care for the most vulnerable in our society.

All the examples that this report will explore will show how GMB is approaching our responsibility for improving the work of women. The Women's Campaign Unit will draw on everything in this report, and no doubt more, in order drive the agenda.

Building on our history

The Matchstick Girls' Strike 1888

Women (and young girls) workers in the Bryant and May matchstick factory went out on strike in 1888. They suffered appalling working conditions; long hours, with little pay, and handling the incredibly dangerous white phosphorous which caused 'phossy jaw' – a type of bone cancer.

Awareness and campaigning on the poor conditions was aided by the writings of Annie Besant through her publication, *The Link*. Bryant and May tried to force the workers to denounce the writings of Besant, and it was at this point the strike began. On the 5th July 1888, and after a sacking, 1400 matchstick women and girls went out on strike.

*"Well, it just went like tinder, one girl began, and the rest said, 'yes', so out we all went."*²

After the walk out, and with facilitation of the London Trades Council, the Strike Committee were successful in having all their demands met by Bryant and May Directors. The Union of Women Match Makers was then founded and the first 468 members enrolled in August.

This strike holds so much importance to our union, as it is widely attributed to inspiring the actions of the Dockers' Strike not long after, and thus the founding our union. GMB has continued to honour the legacy of the women – these empowering women – with our affiliation to the Matchgirls Memorial, for which our President is a patron.

Mary Macarthur and the Chainmakers' Strike

On the 1st January 1921, the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW) amalgamated with the National Union of General Workers, the day of Mary Macarthur's passing. Mary Macarthur's restless organising machinery saw the National Federation of Women Workers grow from 358,000 to 1,960,000 between 1914 and 1918, with average wages for women increasing by 50% in the same period.³

One of the defining campaigns of the NFWW was the Chainmakers Strike of 1910.

Cradley Heath in the Black Country became the epicentre of a women's movement that would set the course of history. In the 19th Century the Black Country was the heartland of the manufacturing of chains, with men working in factories producing heavy chains, and women forging smaller and lighter chains out of their homes.

Despite making the same product, and before the strike in 1910, women were paid one fifth of the average male wage.

These women were working in their back yards with makeshift furnaces, switching between wielding heavy hot metal, childcare and running a household. This was atomised and isolated work, of unorganised labour.

Despite the conditions that would naturally put barriers in place to organise, Macarthur and the NFWW were able to mobilise women workers to strike successfully for equal pay. In this time NFWW membership in Cradley Heath grew from 400 to 1,700.

The Grunwick Dispute

The Grunwick Strike of 1976 is an important dispute within GMB history, and the for the history of UK worker struggles. The workers, mostly South Asian women, faced poor treatment from their management at the Grunwick photo processing plant

and worked in poor conditions, often being forced to work long hours at little notice.

The 1970s remained a time where work for black and Asian workers had little access to well paid, and unionised work. Many of these workers faced discrimination within the trade union movement, as well as from employers.

Yet, at Grunwick, 137 workers led by Jayaben Desai had the courage to join APEX (which amalgamated with GMB in 1989) and go out on strike. The dispute eventually garnered support from sister trade unions, such as the Union of Postal Workers who cut off services to and from the plant, and 20,000 people joined a march in support of the strikers.

This dispute showed not only the tenacity of the striking workers, but the solidarity and community they built in support of them.

Hayward v Cammell Laird 1988

GMB and its predecessor unions were at the forefront of the fight for equal pay legislation. The first equal pay claim was won by a GMWU member, Valerie Perry, in 1976.⁴ And twelve years later, it was a GMBATU (GMB) member who fought the first successful equal pay for equal value claim under the amended Equal Pay Act.

Julie Hayward was a cook in the canteen at Cammell Laird shipyard in the North West, and argued that her work was of equal value to her male craft worker colleagues.

Ultimately this case was litigated through employment tribunal, and ACAS appointed investigators who conducted what many workers have experienced – a job evaluation. What was significant was the precedent it set for equal pay for equal value.

This case also highlighted an issue with the disparities between collective agreements for different workers within the same employer. While the craft workers (thermal insulators, joiners, painters) at Cammell Laird were covered by one agreement, workers like Julie Hayward were on another which bargained for separate terms and conditions. In this case both sets of workers were in the same union.

It's essential that we are conscious of how our collective agreements might have disparities which are detrimental to the pay and conditions of women.

Engineering & Construction

With the example of *Hayward v Cammell Laird* in mind, it must be recognised that work has been ongoing to improve the conditions of work where women are employed in traditionally male roles. In the Engineering and Construction sector, we have been engaging with employers and developed a more diverse workforce on major infrastructure projects such as Hinkley Point C in Somerset and High Speed Rail 2.

While women can make up numbers in cleaning, catering, clerical and other white collar work in these particular industries, there are very few in well paid and importantly unionised jobs in the blue collar or industrial roles.

GMB recognises that there are significant barriers for women being able to enter this work, starting from a skills and experience gap at interview stage, to poor policies around maternity and flexible working, health and safety, and culture.

That culture also extends to our own internal representative structures, where we need to ensure that women are involved in GMB, and that our shop steward networks are inclusive.

Key figures; women's work today

The historical achievements have got us far, but the figures below show us what the present-day concerns are for women.

- Progress in eliminating the gender pay gap is slow, and the full-time pay gap actually rose slightly in 2021 (from 7 per cent to 7.9 per cent).
- Older women workers are significantly more likely to be underpaid compared to men, with the full-time gender pay gap standing at 12 per cent for women aged 40 or over.⁵
- Women still earn 41 per cent less on average over a lifetime, according to the latest estimate.
- Gender pay gaps can present a misleading picture for individual employers. Submissions are not robustly checked and many are 'improbable,' and outsourcing excludes many low-paid women from the figures. Some employers have even reportedly set up new legal entities to disguise their pay gap figures.⁶
- Public sector workers are much more likely to be female - two thirds (64 per cent) of public sector workers are women.⁷ Women are much more likely to

have been affected by the public sector pay freezes and caps imposed since 2010.

- Women are also much more likely to work in undervalued and low wage occupations. Nine out of ten teaching assistants and eight out of ten care workers and home carers are women, according to official statistics.⁸
- Women have also been disproportionately affected by cuts to public service, the benefits freeze, and changes to the child benefit element under Universal Credit. The Women's Budget Group has said that 'aggressive and continuous period of austerity ... has been felt disproportionately by women, single-parents and low-income families more broadly.'⁹
- Three quarters of workers in roles most exposed to the risk of Covid-19 infection are women.¹⁰
- Women were more likely to be furloughed with a loss of pay in 2021 (reversing the position in 2020).¹¹
- Women are more likely to be employed on a zero hours contract (3.8 per cent of women workers compared to 2.6 per cent of men workers).¹²
- 7 out of 10 workers in occupations at the highest risk of automation are women.¹³

Major recent and current GMB campaigns on Equal Pay

The following examples are campaigns that GMB members have been running across local councils and in ASDA. They offer us insight into the strategies our members have deployed, and the barriers they have faced in campaigning on Equal Pay.

Glasgow City Council developed their own pay and grading structure in 2007 called the Workforce Pay & Benefits Review (WPBR) which was underpinned by the WPBR job evaluation scheme. WPBR was found to be discriminatory and it was revealed that male dominated jobs were receiving more favourable terms and conditions such as inflated job evaluation scores, discriminatory payment protection practises and access to bonuses and additional payments schemes women were barred from. October 2018 saw the largest equal pay strike in UK history as thousands of low paid women took to the streets of Glasgow which ultimately resulted in the interim payments made in 2019. At the time of writing,

GMB members remain in dispute while discrimination is ongoing in Glasgow City Council who have failed to implement an equality proof job evaluation scheme and pay and grading system.

Dundee City Council – In 2020, documents were uncovered detailing a very substantial and lucrative bonus scheme for ‘Craft Operatives’ in Dundee City Council. ‘Craft Operatives’ include jobs such as Bricklayers, Lift Engineers, Painters, Labourer and more. These male-dominated job roles have been awarded unjustified bonuses for years which female dominated jobs such as catering assistants, cleaners and care workers have not had access to. GMB Scotland launched the ‘Dundee Pay Justice’ Campaign in February 2021 seeking equal pay for members in Dundee City Council and for members in associated employers, Tayside Contracts and Leisure and Culture Dundee.

Birmingham City Council – In May 2021, GMB and other unions signed a ‘Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Birmingham City Council which was aimed at providing settlement payments for members with potential eligibility for ‘third generation’ equal pay claims. It later came to light that Birmingham City Council had misled the unions and had conceded that their Job Evaluation Schemes could not be relied on, and that male dominated Fleet and Waste job roles had likely been treated more favourably than female dominated job roles in the Council. In November 2021, GMB launched a pay justice campaign for Birmingham City Council members to challenge the settlement payments as we believe members claims are worth much more than the councils offer. To date, thousands of GMB members for submitted for equal pay claims and have joined the campaign for pay justice in Birmingham.

ASDA Equal Pay is a classic case of women’s work being undervalued with distribution being paid higher and with more favourable terms and conditions. Retail is traditionally seen as women’s work and not the ‘breadwinner’ income for households which holds no bearing on modern society. Access to stores over the years to organise has been much more restrictive than in distribution, and an inferior partnership agreement denying proper pay negotiations has meant that the wages of women have not kept up with the parts of the company with men in the majority. This is the biggest equal pay case in the private sector. The private sector generally has a poor reputation for maintaining Job Evaluation schemes which are transparent throughout or having schemes exist at all. GMB has found that there is a distinct lack of gender neutral / equality proof Job Evaluation schemes in the private sector.

Organising for Equal Pay

Equal pay in GMB, and more widely in society, is a long and complex story. Throughout our history and as demonstrated in the 2009 CEC Special Report on Equal Pay, GMB have long campaigned for pay justice for women.

However, there have been times in the past where our actions have failed our members, and in this case, women, on low pay. These are workers who depend on GMB to help them fight against injustices as any great trade union should. Where we can't change the past, we can shape what we do now and in the future on Equal Pay.

In the years since 2009, we have organised a historical equal pay strike in Glasgow and have recovered millions in compensation for our members. We have also brought thousands of claims for retail workers in ASDA. One thing we must continue to do is holding employers to account over equal pay and recognise that equal pay is a journey not just one event or series of historical events.

As demonstrated in recent months and years, the fight for equal pay is not over and by some accounts may take another 200 years at the rate we are going⁶. A key element of pay justice and equal pay is the ongoing education and upskilling of our Organisers, Reps, and members as well as the industrial campaigning we must do to continually ensure that pay structures and job evaluation (JE) schemes remain fit for purpose.

It is now widely recognised that the pool of job evaluation experts with equal pay experience in the UK is diminishing¹. Within trade unions, Organisers and Reps with extensive equal pay experience are also retiring and with that much of their expertise is being lost.

A core feature of the Women's Campaign Unit is to bring together the experiences of Reps and Organisers and to prepare for future equal pay campaigns by not only developing training and resources but also to take on the fight where we find equal pay issues right now.

Rebuilding the core systemic knowledge and experiences of equal pay in GMB is key feature of future-proofing the union and our people for these challenges. It is important to note that not only do we need to rebuild knowledge but so be sure that our campaigns on equal pay are industrial at their heart, build the union and win for members.

How are we going to rebuild knowledge and experiences on equal pay?

Having easily accessible training for Organisers, Reps and members on what is equal pay is a sensible starting point for ensuring a baseline of knowledge within the union. Building on that baseline of knowledge, we start to look at some of the 'risky practices' that employers do which could indicate a potential equal pay issue⁴.

Risky practices can occur in any employer, public or private, and are warning signs that we should be looking further into the job evaluation and pay and grading systems. These include things such as a lack of transparency in either or both the job evaluation scheme and scores and the pay and grade system, bonuses that are unexplained or unjustified, job evaluation schemes and scores that haven't been updated in a long time, indefinite pay protection policies and many more⁴.

Another part of rebuilding our knowledge and experiences is looking critically at how we process equal pay claims internally and bringing our systems into the 21st century. The Women's Campaign Unit in GMB Scotland have developed an electronic system of take and processing equal pay claims, called a case management system (CMS) which has since been rolled out in other Regions. Continuing to build our expertise in taking on claims and processing them rather than paying high solicitors' fees will need to be a feature of our equal pay campaigning in the future.

Equal pay law:

Litigation on equal pay in the UK is a long and costly process. Most equal pay claims take years, even decades, to work their way through the court systems and come with a high price tag. We know this all too well in GMB with high solicitor's fees and as demonstrated in the above campaigns, years of waiting for members.

While the union can and should do as much as possible to mitigate these challenges in the current climate as was reference with the case management system, we can also campaign for improvements in equal pay law that would allow faster and more affordable resolutions to equal pay claims.

In many cases, it is too expensive for individuals to pursue an equal pay claim on their own. Trade unions provide support to collective groups of women on pay justice but there is also a barrier to trade unions in supporting individuals on equal pay which we must address.

Changes in Equal Pay law could make fighting for equal pay more accessible for women across the UK. The Equality Act 2010 states that 'equal work' counts as 'work of equal value', 'work rated as equivalent' or 'like work'².

We face challenges in employers where the workforce is predominately women because there is a lack of male comparators. Low pay in these sectors is more likely a reflection of societies attitude towards women's work generally and sexist assumptions about the value of women's work¹.

The use of 'proxy' comparators in equal pay cases is one option to explore. That would mean that one group of female workers could compare themselves to a group of male workers in another similar larger workplace with a different employer. This legislation already exists in Canada where a recent ruling established that not only could the female group compare to a male group from another employer, but they also had to maintain pay equity and not let discrimination creep back in over time³.

Closing any loopholes or potential loopholes in equal pay law such as using fully funded arm's length organisations (ALEOs) to mitigate the risk of an equal pay claim should be seen as bad practice and discouraged by government but even further closing that loophole to allow workers to achieve pay justice would be a step in the right direction.

Public Sector Equality Duty:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained within the Equality Act (2010) puts the onus on public bodies to ensure that they have due regard to the need to work to provide equal opportunities for all, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it⁷. What is missing in much of how the PSED exists in the UK is the element of accountability.

In Scotland, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published a series of reports tracking Scottish Public Bodies compared to their duties under The Equality Act 2010 (specific duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012⁸. This requires public bodies to report on information related to the PSED such as equality outcomes and publishing statements on equal pay⁸.

In Wales, duties are set out under The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 which includes equality impact assessments (EIA), Strategic Equality Plans, pay differences, reporting arrangements and more. Crucially the duties in Wales also require the public sector to act upon gender pay differences⁸.

The Welsh Government publishes annual reports on progress of outcomes in the Programme of Government and its statutory duties under the Equality Act (2010).

In Northern Ireland, the public sector equality duty lies in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998⁸ which places public bodies and higher education institutes (HEI) under obligation to promote equality of opportunity between men and women, people of different religious beliefs, racial groups, ages, disability status and more⁹.

The PSED is not a solution to equal pay nor is it, in its current form, an effective tool for holding public sector bodies to account in most of the UK in most cases. While employers can be challenged under the PSED in the courts, the duty requires public authorities to think about how their decisions and policies impact those with protected characteristics, rather than forcing them to act and resolve issues of discrimination.

Funding:

The systematic underfunding of local government and therefore putting pressure on wage bills has ensured the underfunding of single status which has in turn created a huge barrier to low paid women in local government achieving pay justice (as described in more detail in the 2019 CEC Special Report on Local Government and Austerity). We must be clear that equal pay must be properly funded by central government for local authorities and the fat cats in business must foot the bill in the private sector. Without the proper resources, we leave the door open for cutting corners and potentially creating problems later on costing more money and importantly wasting time for those at the sharp end of the discrimination.

We know that women have been hit the hardest by austerity and with public sector workers more than 70% women, a public sector pay freeze is a pay freeze for women¹⁰.

Equal Pay in the private sector:

Much of the work done on equal pay has been in the public sector. The less talked about but likely most unequal areas of work are in the private sector. The landmark case in ASDA is a testament to equal pay in the private sector but we are really only scratching the surface.

It is much less common to find analytical job evaluation schemes (or any JE scheme) and equality proof pay and grading systems in the private sector. It's likely a huge number of private sector employers display many if not all of the 'risky practices' we previously mentioned.

In the private sector, it's common place to for companies to have a culture where discussing wages is 'not allowed' or frowned upon which clear leads to issues around pay transparency. Another common practice is advertising jobs without wage information so candidates are forced to negotiate wages once offered the job likely creating an unfair and unequal pay system from day 1⁶.

Often companies of more than 250 employees, which is the threshold for gender pay reporting requirements, are happy to claim they have no equal pay issues without any real evidence to back that claim up¹¹. At times they may boast about how many women are in the boardroom (still probably not a majority of the room) but what is overlooked is the value placed on women's predominately done by women which account for the other part of the Gender Pay Gap.

By increasing our knowledge and confidence around equal pay in the private and public sector, GMB can campaign and win for women members no matter where they work.

Women's Health and Safety: Industrial Injuries and Benefits

The CEC recognises more must be done to better understand the nature of women's work. Where it happens, how it can go wrong and why risk factors are often being ignored. When women are hurt by their employers' negligence, that often goes unchallenged either because of the complexity of the work, the unseen nature of the work or the lack of recognition of the risks involved.

The small number of claims made by women for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) does not mean that occupations women hold is not harmful or dangerous over time. It is more of an indication that there is less of an understanding of the hazards that women face throughout their working lives.

Statistics show that the percentage of women claiming IIDB is a tiny fraction of the total claimed. Startlingly in the quarter to December 2019 out of 2,430 cases, 2,300 (95%) were male and 140 (5%) were female. Looking at those statistics, we have to ask whether these are truly representative of the real numbers of long-term injuries women are developing from work. We know that women make up a substantial part of the economy in the care sector, cleaning, and factories yet the system of industrial benefits does not accurately reflect this. In the context of the IIDB and the role of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council there is a considerable gap in recognising the industrial injuries women sustain.

Caring responsibilities outside of work, or crucially poor Occupational Sick Pay policies (and in many cases a combination of both), can impact on recovery time from illness. Therefore, women can take longer to recover or develop complications. This impacts on job security and earning capacity and can lead to development of chronic illness and potentially early retirement.

Underinvestment by employers in women's health and safety has a significant and negative impact on the economy at large and money saved by an inability to claim IIDB, only puts a burden on other social security benefits and has other socio-economic effects which cost more long term.

Organising women workers and building power to challenge the health inequalities of women's work is core to the Women's Campaign Unit.

Background to The Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB)

- The Industrial Injuries Scheme is a no-fault scheme paid by the Department for Work and Pensions which is in place to support people who are disabled because of an accident at work or have one of a number of prescribed diseases which was caused by their work.
- The IIDB was introduced in 1948 with a focus on male dominated workforces especially agriculture and heavy industry.
- The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is the body that makes recommendations on which prescribed diseases the scheme covers
- The IIAC is made up of 23 people including academic experts, legal experts and 3 trade union representatives.
- The IIAC relies on research and representations brought to them and cannot initiate its own research into industrial injuries and diseases.

The scheme itself does not specifically exclude women but it is clear from the absence of cases that representations and evidence are not being brought forward to the IIAC to broaden the list of proscribed injuries and diseases.

Women make up a large part of the workforce in the care and domestic sectors and jobs involving repetitive work. Women in these parts of the economy suffer from musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) and yet the rates of benefits do not reflect this.

The fact is the settings in which long term damage is done to women workers is likely very relevant to their continued exclusion from the male dominated IIDB. On average, women are less likely to be injured in factories or ship yards, but in classrooms, care homes, individuals' homes and on the street.

Women's work is often perceived as unskilled or low value, and female dominated workplaces for example in the care sector, are not considered places where industrial injuries and diseases happen. This is a fundamental flaw which is reflected in the industrial injuries scheme.

Many factors contribute to the fact that only 5% of cases were brought by women. Publicity and knowledge of how to access the benefit play a role in these gendered outcomes but there are also three main reasons why when women apply for the benefit, they are unsuccessful.

1. They do not meet the threshold of 14% disablement set out in the scheme. Often people need to link multiple conditions to meet this threshold.
2. There is no clear linkage to work, meaning the evidence is not strong enough to link the disablement to industrial exposure. The onus is on women to prove that the injury or illness is work related and is not a result of other means such as domestic or caring responsibilities.
3. Evidence of diagnosis is required and therefore a misdiagnosis from a medical professional can delay or prevent women from bringing a claim in the first place. Delays in diagnosis not only delay a woman's ability to access the benefit but can also lead to the condition become so bad that they can no longer do the job and are forced to retire early or change jobs which we often see in the care sector.

This is not simply an issue of creating a new list of prescribed diseases, there must be work done to understand the context in which injury, illness and disease happens initially, and how it goes on to cause long term harm.

GMB should commit the following to policy:

- Organising claims based on improving the long-term health of women in the workplace
- Build up our own research through member engagement on the conditions of workplaces which affect the health of women
- Health and safety training which includes specific training on IIDB to increase awareness of the benefit.
- Campaign for reform through Department of Work and Pensions (Scotland as an example of reform through SEIAC Bill).

It is clear that more gender focused analysis, proactive identification of emerging issues and research and greater knowledge of how women's health is affected in the workplace is required. It is also clear that in order for change to happen,

women workers must be continually involved in the shaping of the benefit and this must be a priority going forward.

Fight for £15 in Care

GMB proudly represents tens of thousands of members in the Adult Social Care sector.

It is well established that women occupy the majority of roles within the social care sector.

- In England it is estimated that there are 1.56 million jobs in adult social care, where women occupy 84% of the roles within the sector, and the average median pay for a care worker is £9.01¹⁴
- In Scotland there are an estimated 148,000 workers in the sector where the average annual earnings stand at £18,400¹⁵
- In Wales 47,000 work in social care, where women occupy 83% of the workforce¹⁶
- In Northern Ireland there has been recognition that pay needs to be improved in the sector in order to meet the demands of the demographic changes in the coming years – with pay at the centre¹⁷

This is a sector that has seen care homes be run and ransacked by some of the most unscrupulous employers and private equity firms, with little regard for the service users let alone the workers. With poor wages and terms and conditions, it is truly one of the most undervalued services in our economy. The cost of living crisis that we are experiencing, and have experienced through dogmatic austerity measures have pushed people to the brink.

In previous years the CEC has dedicated special reports to Congress on the Care sector, namely our 2016 Special Report on Social Care and our 2017 We Care CEC Statement.

Since then, important research outside of Congress has been conducted on the sector. GMB Scotland published extensive research into the state of the nation's social care sector, including surveys and interviews with workers directly. The GMB Scotland *Show You Care Report* is formulated key industrial bargaining demands for our members.¹⁸

As a result of this research, in October 2021 GMB Scotland launched the Fight for £15 in the care sector, a bold demand from the workforce to employers.

This is a demand that should be made across the UK and throughout GMB.

What has been argued by GMB Scotland and is true for the rest of the UK, is that the COVID-19 pandemic tore apart any illusion that wages in the sector had any adequacy. On top of that, the woeful terms and conditions around sick pay forced workers to continue to care for the service users at the most dangerous and critical time.

A survey of care workers conducted by GMB in the autumn of 2020 and early part of 2021 revealed how mental health was drastically affected;

- 75% of care workers say that their work during the Covid-19 pandemic as had serious negative impact on their mental health
- Women respondents report worse mental health scores than men
- Disabled care workers consistently report worse mental health scores than care workers who are not disabled
- Respondents who are only entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (£95.85 per week) report worse scores on each measure than those who are paid a higher employer sick pay rate

Our care workers rightfully have pointed out the hypocrisy of our governments who jumped on the bandwagon to clap for our carers yet fell silent when they were asked to put their hands in their pockets.

As part of recommendations from this special report, it is proposed that;

- A £15 per hour wage would bring the workforce of the sector to an annual wage in line with the UK national average, close to £30,000 per annum. We must adopt this policy throughout the UK in the care sector.
- For Regions to coordinate as best possible, efforts to lobby national, devolved and Local governments to recognise £15 per hour as the minimum for the sector.
- As part of our ongoing focus on improving the work of care workers, the CEC is committed to presenting a report to Congress 2023 on the sector, including testimony and research gathered from our care worker members directly.

Final Summary

This report has drawn out significant issues that women face at work.

History has shown us that progress is made from the struggles of women trade unionists.

GMB's Women's Campaign Unit has set out to make work better for our women members across the union. As has been made clear in this report, the work women do in our society is often undervalued, underpaid and under recognised.

At its core, the Women's Campaign Unit seeks to collectively build power in workplaces by organising women to fight discrimination and deliver pay justice.

As our movement grows, so does the pressure on bad employers and there will be no where for them to hide.

There are many fronts to fight for the value of women's work so we must be strategic. The industrial campaigns of the Women's Campaign Unit focus on making work better for women by delivering membership growth, pay and value for GMB members.

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³ Tony Barnsley, 'Breaking their Chains; Mary Macarthur and the Chainmakers' Strike of 1910' (Bookmarks Publications, July 2010) pg. 65

⁴ *'In the first year of the implementation of the Equal Pay Act the GMWU has successfully prosecuted a number of cases before Industrial Tribunals ... Indeed, Sister Valerie Perry, a member of the GMWU, was the first woman to win a case under the Act.'* (GMWU, Report of Sixty-Second Congress, 1977, page 122)

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