

National Womens Committee Annual Report

1. The National Women's Committee

National Representatives:

EC Member	Vicky Knight
National Women's Committee Chair	Dona Feltham
National Women's Committee Secretary	Kerry Baigent
National Women's Committee Vice-chair	Helen Harrison

Regional Representatives:

Region 1	Denise Christie
Region 2	Lynda Rowan-O'Neil
Region 3	Samantha Rye
Region 4	Patricia Jefferey
Region 5	No rep
Region 6	Staci Leach/Helen Tooley
Region 7	Helen Harrison
Region 8	Joanne Byrne
Region 9	Emma Davis/Helen Astridge
Region 10	Sally Harper
Region 11	Jenny Impey
Region 12	Kate Ellis
Region 13	Pauline Layhe

2. National Women's Committee Meetings

The National Women's Committee met on several occasions this year.

11th January
NWC business meeting
Womens Library - London

13th February
NWC business meeting
Wortley Hall

14th February
NWC working meeting
Wortley Hall

25th February
NWC exec
Liverpool

9th May NWC Annual Conference meeting
West Midlands office

11th June
NWC working meeting
Wortley Hall

12th June
NWC full business meeting
Wortley Hall

14th and 15th August
NWC Exec
Wortley Hall

2nd October
NWC Exec Meeting
West Midlands office

8th October
NWC full business meeting
Wortley Hall

9th October
NWC working meeting
Wortley Hall

10th December
NWC AGM
Wortley Hall

3. Committees that the NWC were represented at in 2006/07

FBU Executive Council Sub Committees	NWC Official
EC Representation Appeals Committee	Vicky Knight
EC International sub-committee	Vicky Knight
FBU Committees	NWC Official
National Fairness at Work Committee	Kerry Baigent
National Fairness at Work Strategy Group	Kerry Baigent
National Education Committee	Helen Harrison
Regional Education Officers Committee	Helen Harrison
National Health and Safety Committee	Sally Harper
Campaign Coordinators	Kerry Baigent
IRMP Coordinators	Kerry Baigent
Control Care Campaign	Kerry Baigent
Final Appeals Committee	Kerry Baigent
FF Fatalities campaign	Kerry Baigent
Firefighter Representative	Sam Rye
TUC Committees	NWC Official
TUC Women's Committee	Vicky Knight
TUC Gold Badge Panel	Vicky Knight
Other Committees	NWC Official
Charter for Women	Kerry Baigent
CLG Workplace Facilities sub group	Vicky Knight
CLG Exit interviews sub group	Vicky Knight
Equality and Diversity Stakeholder Group	Vicky Knight

4. Conferences/events attended by NWC with speaking commitments

WTUC – 12th – 14th March 08

Location: Eastbourne

Delegates:

Vicky Knight

Kerry Baigent

Dona Feltham

Sally Harper

Sam Rye

Denise Christie and;

Sharon Sales Mossop

Plus two Sororal guests from the UFU

The conference was chaired by Lorene Fabian, who has been a tutor at the FBU Womens School for many years and she did a great job of keeping us all in order and ensuring that the debates were well balanced.

The FBU proposed two motions to the conference. The first motion was concerning the provision of childcare at TUC events and Vicky Knight moved a great speech on behalf of all women members. The Womens Committee knows that until the TUC addresses this issue fully, the movement will be missing out on the involvement of loads of women. As a union we are very proud of our inclusive childcare policy, that not only thinks about the needs of childcare during the day, but also during the evening when a lot of informal work gets done. We want to see this replicated throughout the Trade Union Movement and believe that the TUC must lead by example. This resolution was overwhelmingly carried by the Conference.

The other motion we proposed was regarding Women in Afghanistan and was proposed by Dona Feltham. We wanted to ensure that the increasingly horrendous situation for the women and children in that country is highlighted in order that the crimes currently taking place against them are not hidden from the wider world.

International issues are something that women relate to and have much empathy for, so we were delighted to hear from Dr Shatha Beserati, (our FBU Women's school speaker this year) of the Iraqi Women's League. Shatha's contribution to the conference hi-lighting the plight of Iraqi women and children was shocking, yet motivational and asked affiliated unions to consider supporting the organisation in whatever manner it can. Following on from the amazing bucket collection held at the FBU Womens School just a week before, the FBU delegation decided to hold one at the WTUC and managed to raise just over 500 pounds.

FBU delegates spoke on a range of issues at the Conference.

Welsh TUC Womens Conference

Jo Byrne (Delegation leader)

Tania Morris

Kerry Baigent

Sian Davies

Chair: San Wibblin

Guest Speakers: Cathy Owens, Amnesty International
Samantha Moore, Thompson's Solicitors
Pauline Buchanan, ICTU
Cheryl Gedling, STUC

Sheila Bearcroft, TUC President
Martin Mansfield, General Secretary Wales TUC
Neil Wooding, Commissioner EHRC Wales
Voirrey Manson, EHRC
Natasha Hirst, Wales TUC Women's Committee Secretary

FBU Speeches: Motion 2 – Positive Action & Diversity in Recruitment – moved by Jo Byrne
Motion 9 – Child Poverty – seconded Tania Morris

STUC Womens Conference – 17th and 18th November 08

Location: Perth

Delegates:
Denise Christie
Kerry Baigent
Colleen Devine
Suzanne Dowson

Observers:
Yvonne Cambell

Resolutions:
PPE
Childcare

FBU Speeches: PPE – Suzanne Dowson
Childcare – Denise Christie
Maternity – Colleen Devine
Safety on train stations: Colleen Devine

5. Other National Conferences/Events/Meetings attended on behalf of the NWC

Date	Event	NWC Attendees
8 th January	CLG meeting re: FF survey	Kerry Baigent
9 th January	Region 1 Womens AGM	Denise Christie
10 th January	FAW meeting	Kerry Baigent
16 th January	Abortion Rights lobby - parliament	Kerry Baigent and Dona Feltham
17 th January	Industrial Relations Seminar	Kerry Baigent and Dona Feltham
22 nd January	Charter for Women meeting	Kerry Baigent
28 th January	Sub meeting re Equality and Diversity Strategy questions and answers	Kerry Baigent and Sam Rye
31 st January	Region 9 Womens Meeting	Emma Davis, Helen Astridge and KB
21 st February	Meeting with Minister	Vicky Knight and Kerry Baigent
19 th February	Region 13 Womens Meeting	Pauline Layhe and Kerry Baigent

28 th February	FAW meeting	Kerry Baigent
7 th – 9 th March	Womens Annual School	NWC
11 th March	TUC Womens Committee meeting	Vicky Knight
11 th -14 th March	WTUC	NWC
19 th March	Regional Education Officers Meeting	Helen Harrison
1 st April	Region 10 Womens Meeting London WAC	Sally Harper and Sian Griffiths
3 rd April	Equality sections meeting JM	Kerry Baigent
5 th April	Abortion Rights Emergency Meeting	Kerry Baigent
7 th April	Sub Committee: facilities	K Baigent, S Harper and P Layhe
10 th April	Sub Committee: Positive Action	D Feltham, D Christie and E Davis
16 th April	Sub Committee: Q and A re E& D Strategy	K Baigent, P Layhe and S Rye
19 th April	NAW AGM	Dona Feltham and Helen Harrison
30 th April	Region 7 Womens Meeting	Helen Harrison
7 th May	Flexible Working FAW Sub Committee Meeting	Kerry Baigent
12 th May	Region 9 Womens Meeting	Helen Astridge and Dona Feltham
13 th May	Regionalisation of Control Campaign Co-ordinators	Kerry Baigent
13 th May	TUC Womens Committee meeting	Vicky Knight
13 th May	Region 1 Womens Meeting	Denise Christie
27 th May	Media Training Harper and Jenny Impey	V Knight, K Baigent, J Byrne, K Ellis, S
28 th May	CLG Equality and Diversity Launch Ellis, S Harper and J Impey	V Knight, K Baigent, D Christie, J Byrne, K
19 th -23 rd May	Annual Conference NWC	
2 nd June	Region 13 Womens meeting	Pauline Layhe and Kerry Baigent
5 th June	TUC Equality Briefing	Vicky Knight
13 th June	Womens delegation visit to Avon re: dignity vehicle Kerry Baigent	South West Women, Pauline Layhe and

18 th June	Charter for Women	Kerry Baigent
25 th & 26 th June	Region 13 Womens School	P Layhe, K Baigent and Helen Harrison
1 st and 2 nd July	Region 9 Womens School Baigent	H Astridge, E Davis, D Feltham and K
2 nd July	FAW meeting	Jenny Impey
9 th July	Region 10 Womens Meeting London WAC	Sally Harper and Sian Griffiths
10 th July	Region 6 Womens Meeting	Kerry Baigent and Helen Harrison
15 th July	Region 1 Womens Meeting	Denise Christie
16 th July	TUC Womens Conference Meeting	Vicky Knight
28 th July	Charter for Women	Kerry Baigent
29 th July	Region 7 Womens Meeting	Helen Harrison
1 st August	FF fatalities co-ordinators	Dona Feltham
4 th August	Region 13 Womens Meeting	Pauline Layhe and Kerry Baigent
4 th August	EDSG	Vicky Knight
15 th August	Meeting with Daniel Giblin	Dona Feltham and Helen Harrison
15 th August	Sylvia Pankhurst Lecture	Dona Feltham and Helen Harrison
18 th August	Region 1 Womens Committee	Denise Christie
28 th August	Fire Conference	Dona Feltham
2 nd Sept	Equality sections meeting with John M	V Knight, K Baigent and D Feltham
3 rd September	Spanish Civil War Commemoration	Vicky Knight
4 th September	Region 8 Womens AGM	Jo Byrne and Kerry Baigent
7 th -11 th Sept	TUC	Vicky Knight
8 th September	Region 13 Womens Meeting	Pauline Layhe and Kerry Baigent
10 th September	FF Fatalities co-ordinators	Kerry Baigent
11 th September	FAW meeting	Kerry Baigent
12 th September	Region 9 Womens Meetings	Helen Astridge
13 th September	Women Chain makers festival	Vicky Knight

15 th September	Region 10 Womens Meeting London WAC	Sally Harper and Sian Griffiths
23 rd September	FF fatalities	Kerry Baigent, Dona Feltham
25 th and 26 th September	Region 13 Equality Seminar	Vicky Knight and Kerry Baigent
6 th October	Region 12 Womens Meeting	Kate Ellis
6 th October	Region 3 Womens AGM	Sam Rye
6 th October	EDSG	Vicky Knight
7 th October	TUC Womens Committee	Vicky Knight
10 th – 12 th October	B&EMM School	Helen Harrison
14 th October	EDSG Workshop	Vicky Knight
16 th October	Region 7 Womens Meeting	Helen Harrison
17 th – 19 th October	G and L School	Kerry Baigent
20 th -21 st October	Welsh TUC Womens Conference	Jo Byrne and Kerry Baigent
22 nd October	Region 9 Womens Meeting	Helen Astridge
27 th October	Region 1 Womens Meeting	Denise Christie
29 th October	Region 8 Womens Meeting	Jo Byrne
3 rd November	Region 13 Womens AGM	Pauline Layhe and Kerry Baigent
5 th November	TUC Equality briefing	Vicky Knight
6 th November	NWC School meeting with AGS	Vicky Knight, Kerry Baigent, Dona Feltham
11 th November	Region 11 Womens AGM	Jenny Impey and Kerry Baigent
11 th November	Region 1 Womens Meeting	Denise Christie
12 th November	Lobby of Parliament Christie, Sam Rye, Jo Byrne and Jenny Impey	Kerry Baigent, Sally Harper, Denise Christie, Sam Rye, Jo Byrne and Jenny Impey
13 th November	CLG meeting re: maternity	Vicky Knight and Kerry Baigent
13 th November	CLG Facilities work stream	Vicky Knight
14 th November	FBU sub committee Equality and Diversity Strategy	Vicky Knight and Kerry Baigent

17 th and 18 th November	WSTUC	Denise Christie and Kerry Baigent
17 th November	Region 12 Womens Meeting	Kate Ellis
26 th November	International Sub Committee	Vicky Knight
1 st December	Region 6 women branch officials school Harrison	Helen Tooley, Kerry Baigent and Helen Harrison
6 th December	Abortion Rights AGM	Jenny Impey
8 th December	Region 10 – London WAC meeting	Sally Harper and Sian Griffiths
9 th December	Women Members AGM	NWC and extended delegations

6. Affiliations and donations

- Abortion Rights
- NAW
- CSC
- Amnesty International
- Hands off Venezuela
- Unite Against Fascism
- Working Class Movement Library
- ACTSA

7. Women's Annual School – Wortley Hall

Date: 7th – 9th March 2008

Location: Wortley Hall

Students: 61 Students,

Children: 35

Sororal delegates: 3 from Australian UFU

A timely event, encompassing International Women's Day and covering a range of issues from Equal Pay, How the Vote was Won, Responding to the National FRS Equality and Diversity Strategy and Women in Iraq - ensured wide debate and inclusion of all.

Our Sororal guests (women firefighters) from New South Wales and Tasmania Fire departments gave interesting input on the political scene for Women in overseas FRS's and our Guest Speaker from the Iraqi Women's league,

Dr Shatha Beserani gave a fantastic account of life for Iraqi women after the Invasion of Iraq.

Shatha told us how it is for Women and Children still living in Iraq, many widowed or orphaned, how the involvement of trade unions, and international aid is crucial to the rebuilding of their cities and how – by acting collectively, the Iraqi Women's League have re-instated from the rubble in towns like Basra, libraries and schoolrooms to enable communities to function and grow.

A collection at the school for the IWL raised £545.

8 workshops ran this year over the weekend, and evening sessions ran showing DVD's on the TUC Equal Pay archives and the NYFD film "taking the heat" which was requested again and again over the weekend period.

On International Women's day morning, the General Secretary addressed the school and in the evening, a banner procession and mass meeting/celebration was held in the ballroom presenting the work of the "Young trade unionists" in attendance and contributions from guests and students alike celebrating the event.

Sunday morning was utilised as a 3 hour session collating the FBU Women's response to the Equality and Diversity strategy and questionnaire outcomes, soon to be released by CLG. Hopefully to assist in arming our members with the tools they may require in dealing with the forthcoming survey results and probable backlash and how to assist brigades in addressing the outstanding issues surrounding Equality in their FRS's. These workshop outcomes were wonderful and will be fed back into the relevant channels via John McGhee's office.

The feedback from the school was fantastic and there is a definite thirst for political, feminist and equality education amongst our women members and officials. Professor Mary Davis's sessions linking the working class struggle with Class and Gender politics and Feminist/Socialist Politics would, it has been suggested by many women in their feedback results, be a lesson to all of our members in translating the adage 'Unity is Strength'.

The National Women's Committee did a wonderful job of organising and accomplishing the whole event, which simply couldn't take place in the format it is and as accessibly as it is today without the services of our Creche workers who enable many women members who usually wouldn't, to access FBU education. The usual breakdowns of the monitoring process information will also be completed in the near future, allowing proper evaluation of the event and it's attendees.

For information, the Workshop sessions were:

- Workplace Bullying
- How the Vote was won- The east London federation of suffragettes and the significance of Sylvia Pankhurst.
- Women and the Women's movement today.
- Finding your voice- learn to speak up.
- Women's health and Safety.
- Women in the fire service.
- Depression and Post Natal Depression.
- Do women have a 'best before' date?- the media portrayal of women and attitudes towards ageing.

8. Other areas of work that the NWC have undertaken

Brigade Women's Committees

The agenda set by the NWC for the past 12 months was to continue our work around the organisation of FBU women members. We have recorded the regional Womens meetings earlier on in this report, but in addition to those there has been a huge number of Womens meetings held within Brigades. These meetings have been held in addition to the continuing work of the regular meetings that are already galvanised within organised Brigades.

Regional Women's Committees

Due to the above mentioned work in Brigades the NWC have progressed the Regional Women's Committees even further. All regions bar one now have a Regional Womens Representative and as can be seen from the record, meetings are running well, with many more women becoming active. Thanks to regions for their support in holding these meetings

Website

The website has continued to be updated throughout the year and the regional reps have kept the members calendar updated. Tom Gill is currently making enquiries in regard to updating the website and organising the design so that it is easier to use.

CLG Equality and Diversity Strategy

The results from the FF survey were published in May of this year alongside the launch of the CLG equality and diversity strategy. The NWC sub committee put together a set of questions and answers for our women members to empower them at work and to help prevent any backlash that may have occurred. Sally Harper talked about the strategy on Womens Hour on Radio 4. She was brilliant.

Unisex Facilities

I am pleased to report that the FBU's sustained opposition to the building of unisex facilities has been very successful this year as it has been reported by regional Womens reps that in many cases we have been able to prevent them being built. It appears that we have been successful in informing brigades that they are a bad idea and not conducive to good working relations between men and women. In addition to all the local work that has been done, Vicky is currently working on a model policy with the CLG which will not include the adoption of unisex facilities. The fight continues though as some Brigades are still to be convinced!

Minimum Workplace Facilities, Best Practice Document

Thanks to the work of the NWC this document has just been published and circulated to all Brigade Secretaries. This policy should go some way to assisting Brigade Officials in their work within the facilities arena.

Thanks also to the Regional Health and Safety Committee for their contribution.

New/old Reps

The Committee has seen the election of three new regional NWC reps in the year 2008, Helen Tooley – Region 6, Kate Ellis – Region 12 and Jo Byrne – Region 8. Congratulations to all three who have already been a great asset to the committee.

A big thank you goes to Staci Leach who stood down earlier this year due to work and family commitments. Staci worked extremely hard on behalf of the NWC despite being pregnant and giving birth to three children during her elected period. Staci is still the Northamptonshire Womens Rep.

Siren

We have produced three copies of Siren this year, which has been distributed to branches and women members' home addresses. The three magazines have been great campaigning tools and we have received many calls from women members who have been inspired by the contents. Big thanks must go to Helen Hague, Tom Gill and Anna Zych for all their assistance on the production of the mag.

Negotiating Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Rights Document

The NWC finished writing this document at the end of 2007 and were delighted to see it produced professionally in January of this year and circulated to officials. It must be reported that the then Fire minister – Parmjit Dandhar wrote a letter to John McGhee commending the document.

The reports received from Regional Womens Reps regarding local negotiations are positive and we are delighted to learn of the Isle of Wights adoption of the FBU policy in full – yes that does include 39 weeks at full pay

Positive Action Negotiating Tool

The NWC finished collating the Positive Action Tool which has been submitted to the regional FAW committee for consideration and additional points. Well done to all concerned in putting this together.

Support and advice to women members

NWC Officials have represented 70 women in the year 2008.