

**UNISON**  
**Charter for**

***Tackling***  
***Violence***  
***against***  
***Women***  
***& Girls***  
***(VAWG)***



**IT'S TIME TO  
END VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN AND GIRLS**



# Background to the VAWG Charter

In recent years there has been an unprecedented rise in misogyny and violence against women and girls across the world. It is rife and on a scale never seen before.

Over one in four women are estimated to have experienced sexual assault or attempted assault in their lifetime, and one in 12 women experience VAWG each year, although the actual number is likely to be much higher. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) reported in 2022-23, 20% of all police-recorded crime was related to violence against women and girls.

Those experiencing violence suffer long-term impacts affecting them physically, mentally, socially and financially.

UNISON are working with employers to put in place an effective system of monitoring, support, safeguards and training. These are measures that every employer should be able to deliver. We are asking only that employers take their duty of care to staff seriously.

UNISON General Secretary Christina McAnea - "The campaigning never stops. UNISON, with its million-plus women members, continues to use our influence to push for change, and to speak up whenever there is injustice, discrimination or abuse.

The vast majority of those delivering public services, impacted such violence are women. Without women, those essential public services couldn't function."

This is a Health and Safety Issue; it is clear in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 that employers are required to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers.

They have a duty of care to protect staff, which includes protection from sexual harassment and all forms of violence at work under the Worker Protection Act 2023 (s. 40A of the Equality Act implemented Oct 2024).

And this is a Workplace Issue, it is a Trade Union issue, it is an Equality issue, it is also a North West UNISON priority issue because more women live in oppressed households in the NW than anywhere else in the UK.

The North West has also been identified as the area within the UK as having the most child sexual exploitation and violence.



To qualify for the UNISON Violence against Women and Girls Charter mark, signatories must meet the following standards:

1. Have a written Domestic Abuse, Violence and Aggression at work policy, which is available to all staff, responsibility for implementing these policies lies with a senior manager.
2. Thorough risk assessments are conducted for staff placed in potentially vulnerable situations. Measures are taken to reduce work in areas where staff could be subjected to violence and / or abuse and safety measures are in place - e.g. panic buttons, personal alarms.
3. To adhere to the mandatory duty (Workers Protection Act, implemented 2024) to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees in the course of employment.
4. Staff are encouraged to report all violent or abusive incidents, including those online or by phone and they are informed how to do this.
5. The employer collects and monitors data on violent and abusive incidents on a regular and ongoing basis.
6. Where they are in place, union safety reps are able to access this data and are consulted on solutions to issues relating to violence and abuse in the workplace.
7. The signatory has support pathways in place for women who are victims of abuse and/or violence either at work or at home, so that they know where to turn for advice and support and managers are trained to recognise this.
8. Paid special leave and discretion in the sickness triggers for women who have or have experienced violence and / or abuse, whether it be at home or in the workplace.
9. Code words or hand signals are available and widely known for use when staff are calling in sick or being contacted whilst off work.
10. Where appropriate, independent counselling services are available to staff who have experienced violence at work.

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# Implementing the VAWG Charter

UNISON will approach all major public sector employers to sign up to the charter.

Evidence of compliance with the charter's 10 points will be required.

Organisations requiring changes to their practices will be given one year to implement changes that deliver on all 10 charter points.

## *UNISON's Violence Against Women and Girls Charter: Campaigning for an end to violence against women and girls*

To find out more about UNISON's Violence against Women and Girls Charter, visit:  
<https://northwest.unison.org.uk/vawg>

