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# WOMEN'S TALK

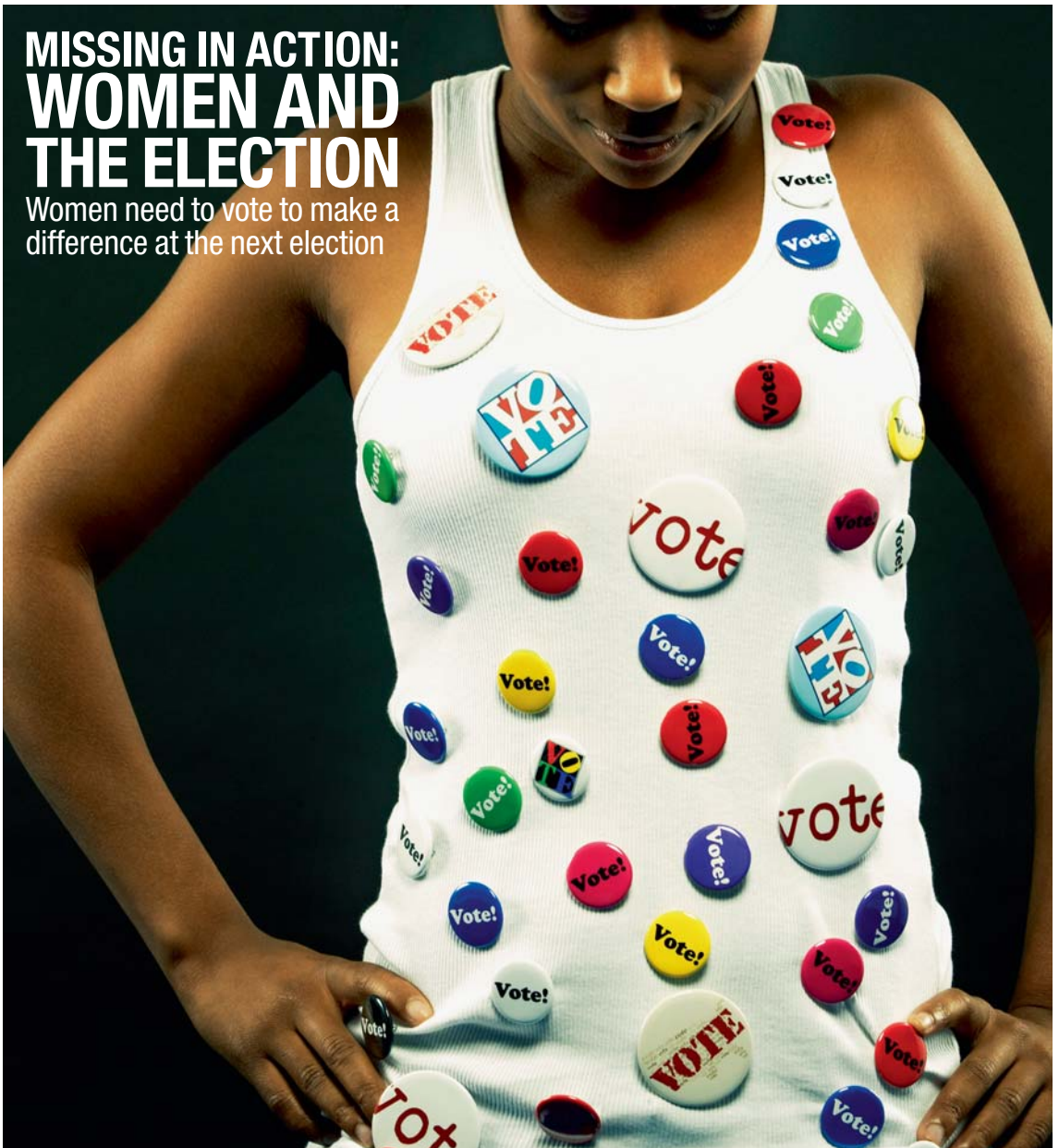
The communications union

THE MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN IN CWU

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## MISSING IN ACTION: WOMEN AND THE ELECTION

Women need to vote to make a difference at the next election



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# WORKING STANDARDS

**BILLY HAYES**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**



The old wisdom in the labour movement used to be that women would be expelled from work during recessions. We now know this to be untrue. Women's employment has reached record levels, but it's clear that women coming into the workforce are subjected to a different discrimination. Women are completely disproportionately represented in the use of insecure contracts,

particularly zero-hour contracts and bogus forms of self-employment. This is presumably one reason why the gender pay gap widened in 2013. To help tackle this we must seek minimum standards across sectors, rather than just in our recognised companies – securing the Living Wage would raise pay for so many in non-unionised workplaces for example. And we need a political environment which helps us do this. We're far more likely to achieve this under Labour than any other government.

*Billy Hayes*

## Voting works

**KEVIN SLOCOMBE**  
**HEAD OF COMMS**

This edition's front cover feature is on 'women and the election'. We're deliberately urging women to vote as 9.1 million didn't last time around – perhaps you're one of them?

If not it's likely you know someone who didn't. Such a huge number of women's voices missing isn't good for democracy and leaves important views and issues off the agenda. That's also why we're doing work on improving women's representation at all levels of

CWU; see page 6 for more on that. Stepping up can be daunting but taking that first step – voting, attending a meeting or standing for a position – makes all the difference.



*#Vote*

## Woman power

**KATH KELLY**  
**EDITOR**

Welcome to Women's Talk. As the General Election is looming it is imperative that we encourage our female members to use their vote – not just CWU women but all women.

We need a government who will support women with a balance of work and home life. Women need a voice and this is one way we can be heard. We can make a difference by using our votes; we can help put the right government into power. Last election millions of women failed to vote. Just think what we can achieve if all WOMEN did.



*K. Kelly*

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY [ON TWITTER]



8th March 2015 was International Women's Day. Thousands of people took to the streets or attended events and many others took to Twitter

## Here's a selection of what was being Tweeted...



Women marching in Central London today to stand up against oppression ahead of #WomensDay tomorrow #millionwomenrise **CWU**  
@CWUnews Mar 7



Emma Watson Q&A on Women's Day: "If you stand for equality, then you're a feminist." [on.mash.to/1wROE56](http://on.mash.to/1wROE56)  
**Mashable**  
@mashable Mar 8



"Women make immeasurable contributions to our world." - President Obama #HappyinternationalWomensDay  
**Barack Obama**  
@BarackObama Mar 8



A marvellous #IWD2015 Keep celebrating women's achievements & calling for equality all year. Let's #MakeItHappen. Make everyday #womensday  
**Women's Day**  
@womensday Mar 8



Happy International Women's Day! Let's make 2015 the year we move women's equality forward: [labour.tw/1DXWld6](http://labour.tw/1DXWld6)  
#IWD2015  
**The Labour Party**  
@UKLabour Mar 8



"We want gender equality, we want it now!" - March for Gender Equality on IWD2015! #Beijing20  
**UN Women**  
@UN\_Women Mar 8



Happy #internationalwomensday & thank you to @GloriaDePiero & @Grazia\_Live for brilliant campaign which forced Govt to do more on #equalpay  
**Yvette Cooper**  
@YvetteCooperMP Mar 8



Suffragettes and modern day feminists, standing together for women. Women's rights are human rights  
#IWD2015 #WIHS  
**CARE InternationalUK**  
@careintuk Mar 8



Today let's celebrate the pioneers of gender equality, but remember too many women are still battling everyday sexism. #IWD2015  
**Ed Miliband**  
@Ed\_Miliband Mar 8



Bangladeshi unions protest for maternity leave equality on #IWD2015 [uniglobalunion.org/news/banglades...](http://uniglobalunion.org/news/banglades...)  
**Uni Global**  
@uniglobalunion Mar 9



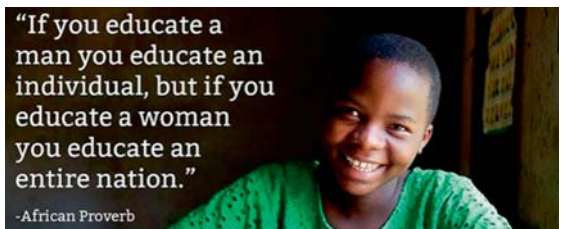
Girls are equal members of society, sources of hope for future - investments worth making! #IWD2015  
**UNICEF @UNICEF**  
Mar 8



"history of all times and of today especially, teaches that women will be forgotten if they forget to think about themselves" - Louise Otto  
**CWU Youth**  
@CWUYouth Mar 8



It says a lot about a society that prioritizes education for women. h/t @RoomtoRead #IWD2015 #WomensDay  
**Malala Fund**  
@MalalaFund Mar 8



Women have an impact at the negotiating table



Image: Rawpixel / Shutterstock

## Contact centre gender agenda

### REPRESENTATION

"All experience shows us that when women are at the negotiating table, issues that are important to women are brought to the table." This was a key message from Denise McGuire – a BT employee and president of global union UNI's world women's committee. Denise was presenting at a European contact centre organising event held in London in February where she outlined the work of UNI for working women.

In addition to running mentoring programmes, UNI has recently changed its



Denise McGuire

rules to ensure that a minimum of 40% of all its delegations and decision making bodies are female. "This is something which our member unions have been able to take back and challenge their own organisations to achieve" she explained.

**58%** of Scottish contact centre workforce are women

When explaining the 'gender agenda', Denise stressed the importance of asking and involving women in initiatives, having women active at all levels of an organisation and ensuring that women are visible in campaigns. "Contact

centres are like lots of workplaces when it comes to women" she said; "there's a pyramid with lots of women at the bottom but more often than not a high paid man at the top." Her words were reinforced by Professor Phil Taylor who later spoke about the glass ceiling being in evidence in contact centres. "Women may make team leader and middle management but rarely higher", he said.

With women making up large parts of the contact centre workforce – 58% in Scotland and a whopping 78% in southern Europe – it's an area which unions simply cannot ignore when it comes to recruiting members and tackling workplace issues.

## Linda Roy elected to UNI committee

### GLOBAL

CWU equality officer Linda Roy has been elected onto the UNI Global women's committee. UNI is the trade union body representing post and telecom workers around the world. Linda was elected onto the committee in December 2014 at the four-yearly UNI women's forum in Cape Town. The world committee comprises members elected from four global regions – Africa, the Americas, Asia and Pacific, and Europe – and tackles issues such as equal pay, women's health and violence against women. "It's a huge honour to be elected to such a prestigious body" said Linda. "I hope to bring the voice and experiences of CWU women to the top of UNI and work alongside union colleagues from across the world on campaigns which will improve the lives of working women everywhere."

## Not Just For Boys campaign supported by telecoms businesses

### CAMPAIGN

BT Openreach and Telefonica O2 are supporting the Not Just For Boys campaign which was launched by the Department for Work and Pensions in February

ahead of International Women's Day. The engineering and mobile companies are helping to bust the image of male-dominated workforces by tweeting photos of female engineers alongside the hashtag #NotJustForBoys.

The campaign is aimed at traditionally male dominated sectors such as construction, engineering, science and tech with the aim of inspiring

girls and women to train and enter into these professions.



# Making it happen for the CWU in Manchester

## EVENTS

Women from across the UK got together to celebrate International Women's Day on Sunday 8th March, with this year's theme being 'Making it Happen'.

International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s and is now a globally recognised day which is celebrated around the world – 27 countries even have it as an official public holiday. It is an annual celebration of women's achievements and a call for greater equality.

CWU's main focus was on events taking place in Manchester, with a series of speakers, workshops and performances covering a range of women's issues. Regional and national CWU women's committees held a joint meeting on the



Image: Jihavai / Shutterstock

Saturday before, with many staying for the events on Sunday and some bringing their families along.

“International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s”

“It was an inspirational weekend”, said CWU equality officer Linda Roy. “It was very encouraging to see a lot of new women at the meetings and interesting to hear about issues that women are

facing in their workplaces.”

There was a workshop on keeping girls safe in sexual relationships, and a panel discussion on the importance of women voting, and one of the highlights of Sunday's activities was the speakers from Palestine who gave personal accounts of life for women on the West Bank. “It was really eye-opening” said North West women's officer Karen Bosson. “The stories of terrible treatment were shocking and certainly made people think.”



Pioneering CWU women on the first ever CWU Mentoring Course at our Residential Education Centre, Alvescot Lodge in March 2015. These newly trained and potential mentors in our movement are helping to shape a mentoring strategy for the CWU.

## InBrief

### Tribunal fees lead to 90% drop in sex cases

Sex discrimination cases have dropped by over 90% since the introduction of tribunal fees. Labour MP Kate Green challenged the government on this record – which includes cases of pregnancy related discrimination – at a parliamentary questions session on 26 February. Describing the fall as “shocking”, Kate asked: “is the system giving those women fair access to justice?” Responding, Minister Nicky Morgan said the government was committed to reviewing the situation, “but we think that this is a matter for the next administration and the next Parliament.”

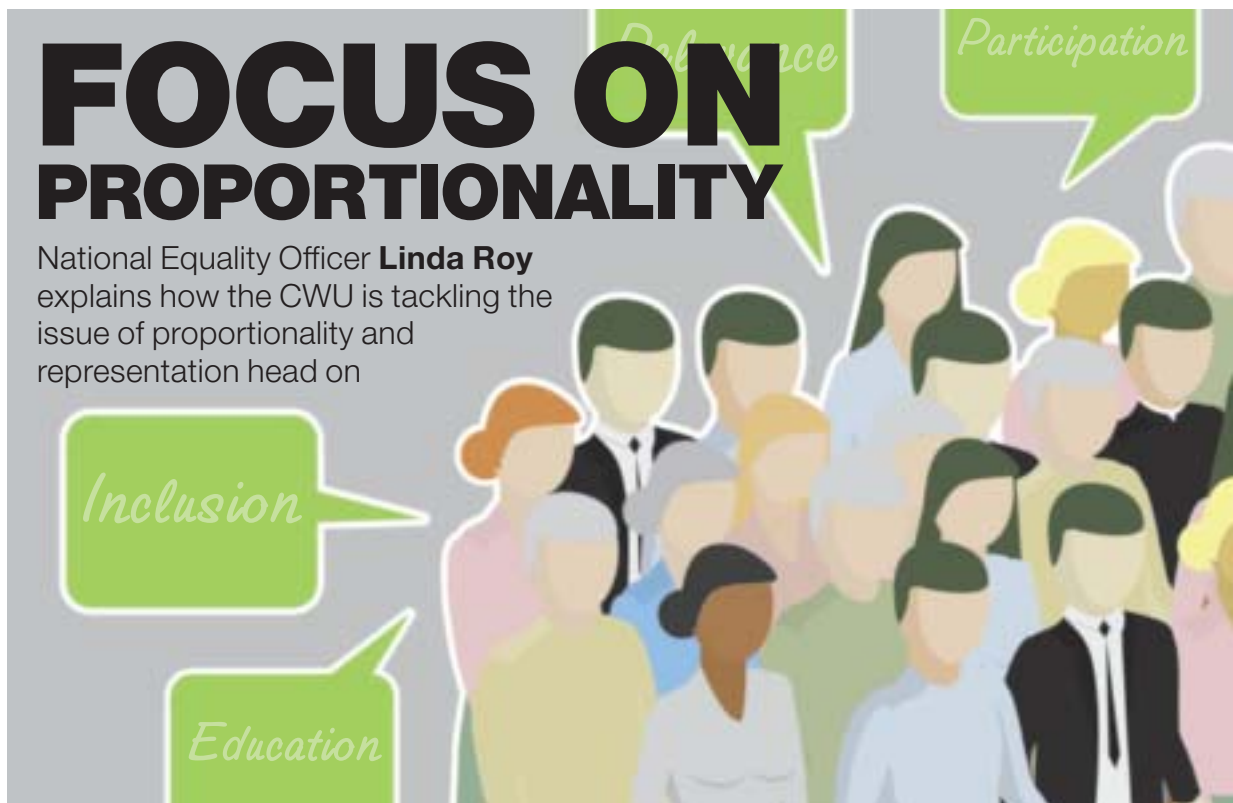
### Springboard success

CWU is taking advantage of an open door in Royal Mail towards equality issues to train women up as expert speakers. The independent training scheme – called Springboard – aimed at upskilling and improving the confidence of women has been broadened from targeting those interested in moving to management to now being available to all women in the business. CWU has been involved in training speakers and aims to have 40 women trained by April. “We're definitely seeing more women taking up union roles as a result of interaction with Springboard” explained CWU vice president Jane Loftus.



# FOCUS ON PROPORTIONALITY

National Equality Officer **Linda Roy** explains how the CWU is tackling the issue of proportionality and representation head on



**O**ver the last two years we have embarked on a very ambitious project to ensure that our structures and rules are inclusive and proportionate.

We carried out detailed research into our membership and activist data, producing a very clear analysis of how proportionate we are. We know for instance, from the data we have, that nearly 15% of our members are from ethnic minorities. We know that part-time work is increasing. Our own part-time members are twice as likely to be women and under 30. We know our industries and workplaces are changing and we need to maintain relevance to all members.

To date, the proportionality team – which includes myself, general secretary Billy Hayes and head of education Trish Lavelle – has visited 29 branches throughout the UK and this process has been ongoing since 2012.

## Putting everything in place

Updating and gathering information has been a priority. Software systems have been updated and we now have in place a computer system to gather this information which branches are able to update. It allows our union to identify the demographic data much more accurately and this will get even better over time.

A branch census will be carried out and this will be updated every two years.

# 15%

of members are from ethnic minorities

Monitoring of Equality Conferences has started to take place, which will enable us to measure how we are doing on attendance and to see who registers to attend versus who is actually present.

Educational courses have been set up on: Women's leadership; Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) leadership; Mentoring leadership.

New rules have been put in place. One being that branches allocate sufficient funds to ensure branch representation and participation at equality conferences and events. And a new branch position has been created of BAME Officer.

So we have looked at equality structures, we have looked at education and we are looking at structures and



Image: Turovsky / Shutterstock.com

## Publications for women members

New literature specifically addressed to the needs of women in the workplace

### A woman's place is in the CWU

CWU's postal department launched a booklet in the autumn aimed at women working in the postal industry. It gives a short historical overview of women in the CWU – starting with Jean Cooper who was the first woman to be elected to the postal executive in 1992 – and continues with case studies and practical advice on setting up women's committees and raising women's issues in the workplace. The booklet encourages women to become active in the union and outlines a raft of support available.



### Getting women members active

The union's telecoms and financial services (T&FS) department has produced a booklet on recruiting, representing and promoting women from those industries. Packed with info and stats – such as 24% of T&FS members are women but only 21% are branch secretaries and 17% branch chairs, although at a national level 44% of the executive are women – it provides practical tips on recruiting and involving women in the CWU.



● Ask your branch for a copy or find them on the CWU website [www.cwu.org](http://www.cwu.org)



Image: wearethemedia / Shutterstock.com

how we do our business as a union from top to bottom.

During visits to branches we discussed how they carry out elections and communicate with their members. There were some really good examples of branches being pro-active. Some have set up Women's and BAME committees in the workplaces.

“We are making progress in making our union more proportionate and more relevant to our members”

The proportionality team has met with all the advisory committees and the NEC to gather feedback and hold a workshop. The advisory

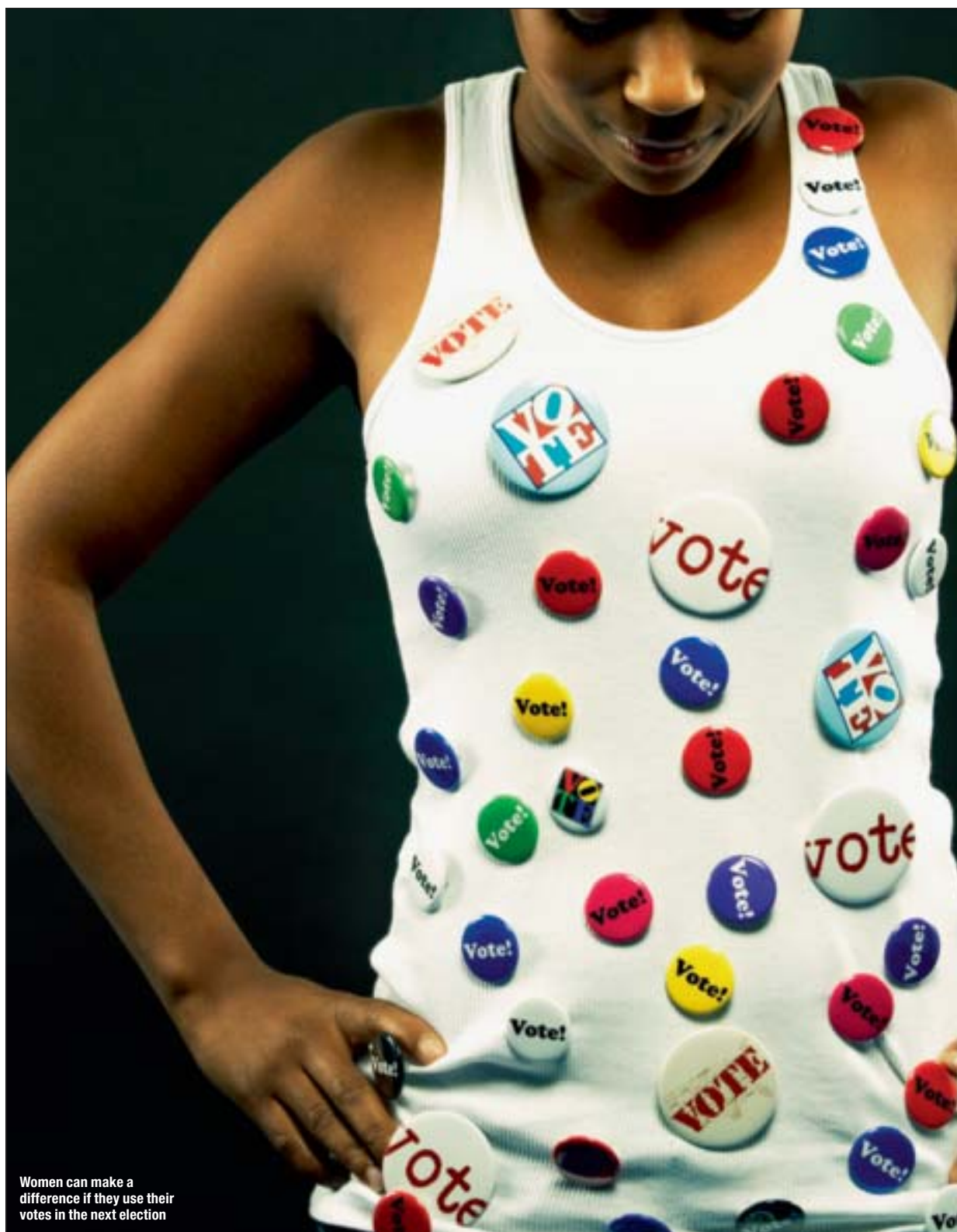
committees in turn have met with both deputy general secretaries and industrial executives. If industrial briefings are being held it is now recognised that a woman should be included in the delegation.

### Changing the rules

Rule changes have been taken to conference and agreed and further rule changes are being taken to conferences this year.

This year will see the trial of holding equality conferences during the week.

We are making progress in making our union more proportionate and more relevant to our members. It's a long road we are going down but I am sure we will eventually get there.



Women can make a difference if they use their votes in the next election



# MISSING IN ACTION: WOMEN AND THE ELECTION

Are you one of over nine million women who didn't vote at the last General Election? Low electoral turnouts are becoming the norm in the UK and women are failing to vote in higher numbers than men. **Sophie Kimber** looks at why it is essential for women to turn out this polling day...

**O**n Thursday 7 May the country goes to vote. Or at least it should.

Politicians from every party are vying for votes, hoping you'll see the sense in their education policy, their proposals for the NHS or their housing pledges. But the number of voters is falling, levels of apathy are rising and women are outperforming men in their disdain of the political system.

Over 17 million people didn't vote in 2010, over nine million of them women. Comparably, in 1992 78% of eligible women voted, 1% more than men. In 2010, these figures were 64% and 67% respectively.

Non-voters give a number of reasons why they won't or don't vote. But there are always more reasons why you should.

## **"Nothing changes no matter how I vote"**

Think back to your life five years ago. It is estimated workers are £1,700 worse off than in 2010. VAT went up by

2.5% but wages haven't. Most workers haven't seen a pay rise. There are 1.8 million people on zero hour contracts.

Think about what local services have closed in the past five years – 720 children's centres, 32 women's refuges, over 600 libraries and 500 GP services. It's estimated that 85% of the Coalition Government's cuts have come out of women's pockets.

## **"Politicians are all the same"**

Undoubtedly, there are many politicians who come from similar backgrounds in the Houses of Parliament. However, there are also business leaders, solicitors, nine doctors, 24 school teachers, 10 farmers, 28 journalists and seven miners. There's even a former postman and bricklayer.

In every constituency, prospective parliamentary candidates will be clamouring over each other to speak to local people and convince them of their sincerity. You can ask them

difficult questions about issues that matter to you, locally and nationally. You'll quickly find out that they aren't all the same and they have different priorities.

“Non-voters give a number of reasons why they won't or don't vote. But there are always more reasons why you should...”

## **"The system is broken"**

Many critics are in agreement that the UK's electoral system is broken and must be reformed. However, this is partly because of the fall in the numbers of people voting. Many in power are elected with a lower vote share than ever before, bringing into question their legitimacy.

Yet, should the Conservatives win in May, David Cameron pledges that any strike by a trade union affecting public services would need the backing of 40% of eligible union members. Many elected politicians would fall short ▶



Harriet Harman (grey coat, centre) heads up Labour's engagement with women



Female Labour supporters at an event in East London with MP Rushanara Ali

► of this requirement if it was applied to their elections.

**Women need to show they want change**

With women being particularly affected by the Coalition's austerity agenda, the Labour Party has policies to help women including 25 hours of free childcare for three and four year olds, assisting older women who are working longer and looking after relatives, and taking tougher action on domestic violence.

Labour also pledges to tackle pay inequality between men and women, with more women than men being in low-paid insecure employment. "For all the progress we made, we didn't get as far as we wanted and

with this government we are slipping back," deputy leader of the Labour Party Harriet Harman told *Women's Talk*.

The Coalition Government boasts that employment levels are high but the reality is that the jobs on offer are temporary jobs when people want permanent jobs, part-time when they want full-time, or two or three low-paid jobs when they just want one decently paid job. Harriet continued: "The government is saying everybody is better off but we know people are suffering. It's particularly unfair to women.

"We need to change the government so women can make progress. If all the women who didn't vote in the last election voted in May it would make a huge difference."

**Case studies – why vote?**

**Becca Hufton**, Youth Officer, Kent Invicta



I want to vote because I think of all the sacrifices the women who fought for the vote made and I don't want to be selfish, I don't want what they did to be wasted. Young women should be aware of what the Tories are doing as their policies will badly affect them in the future.

**Maxine Penkethman**, Midlands No. 7



I think it's equally important for women and men to vote. We've all been given this right and it's our responsibility to exercise it. It's not even an option for me, it's just something I have always done and will always do.

**Denise Collins**, Northern Ireland Combined



If people don't vote then they've only themselves to blame for the outcome of the election. It's down to all of us to take part.

**Rushanara Ali MP**



"The Labour party has more women than all of the other parties put together."

*Image: By OCF (Own work) via Wikimedia Commons*

**Harriet Harman MP**



"Parliament doesn't have legitimacy unless it represents all the people in the country."

*Image: University of Salford via Flickr.com*

# SPEAK OUT AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Fabulous women speakers at a recent Women of Today event provided inspiration to 60 North West women to challenge when things aren't right by getting involved

**S**howing that women can make a difference was the aim of a successful event in Manchester in January run by the CWU's North West women's committee. The event featured a showcase of experienced women from the world of politics, campaigning, policing and the CWU covering a challenging range of subjects aimed at inspiring women to step up and get involved.

Karen Bosson, CWU North West women's committee member and an Openreach engineer by profession, was the driving force behind the event. "I wanted to organise an event that inspired people to get women involved and active, to give them confidence. And to improve their political awareness" she

explained. Clearly the demand was there as Karen had to order extra refreshments when the turnout hit 60 on the day.

And with an impressive all-female line up of expert speakers it's not surprising. These included Margaret Oliver, who resigned from Greater Manchester Police and blew the whistle over failures to investigate child sex abuse cases such as the Rotherham scandal. Sylvia Lancaster OBE, mother of Sophie who was murdered for being a 'goth' aged just 20, now campaigns against hate crime and had an incredible story to tell; "you could have heard a pin drop when Sylvia was speaking" one attendee said. Hayley Harewood from the campaign group Keeping Our Girls Safe, which runs workshops for teenage girls

“The event featured a showcase of experienced women”

**Below:** Attendees captivated by the inspirational talks of the event speakers

on healthy relationships, was also on the bill as was the inspirational Eileen Turnbull who has worked alongside Ricky Tomlinson on the Shrewsbury 24 campaign aiming to overturn the convictions and sentences of building workers who took part in picketing during the 1972 national strike.

## Talking to politicians

"The aim was to give our members and activists an opportunity to listen to women who have made a difference and say they are just the same as you" Karen explained. "From the speakers we had a theme developed over the day and it was: Challenge when things aren't right, speak out and make a difference'."

Panel sessions on politics and the CWU provided attendees with direct access to politicians, including Labour prospective parliamentary candidate Julie Cooper and local councillor Sandra Walmsley, and CWU leaders such as vice president Jane Loftus, national equality officer Linda Roy and reps including Katie Dunning, Vicky Cornelius and Karen Graham.

"We had quite a few members who had never been to anything like this before and I think it was challenging, some have told me how much they got from it" said Karen.



# INTRODUCING THE ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

Abortion Rights campaigns for the right to free, safe, legal and accessible abortion. Here, **Kerry Abel**, their Chair, explains further...

**A**bortion Rights is a membership based organisation with strong trade union links built up over many years. Abortion Rights is proud of our links with the trade union movement and recognises this as critical to the advancement of our campaign to provide free, safe accessible abortions for all women. CWU has been a long standing political and practical ally in the campaign to defend a woman's right to choose.

“Crucial to our campaign is recognising the needs of all women in society”

Crucial to our campaign is recognising the needs of all women in society. Abortion Rights has defended disabled people, black women, migrant rights and those from the LGBT community. We campaign for access to abortions, especially in austerity times, and for

women to be trusted and listened to, whoever they are. We know these are principles also held by the trade union movement and we work closely to ensure that we are as representative as possible.

Abortion is part of our social landscape – one in three women will have at least one termination in her lifetime. However, stigma still surrounds this fundamental aspect of reproductive healthcare and about the kind of women who have abortions.

A consistent 75% of people in the UK support the right to choose. The disconnect between public opinion and how abortion is represented in the media and in Parliament galvanises Abortion Rights' aim to bridge this gap in order to encourage policy change to abortion's legal status.

We believe abortion should be free, safe and legal – treated like any other medical procedure – and therefore, regulated alongside other common and



Images: Andrew / Shutterstock.com

**Above: Each new generation of women need to defend the right to choose**

necessary NHS procedures. This will help normalise abortion, which is a common procedure.

## Defending and extending abortion rights:

The 1967 Abortion Act is almost 50 years old. Abortion Rights recognises this was a victory for women's rights and made way for one of this century's most important advances in public health – providing women with reproductive freedom as well as the ability to make their own choices about their fertility.

Paradoxically, women still cannot access safe abortions without the approval of two doctors. Doctors make a



**75%**  
of people in the  
UK support the  
right to choose

women's access to abortion. Fortunately our MPs saw through this and voted to reject it, not least because trade union activists became involved and put pressure on their MPs.

“We believe abortion should be free, safe and legal – treated like any other medical procedure”

It is now time to be active and push for abortion legislation to be updated. We believe it's time for a modern Abortion Act fit for the 21st Century and we're campaigning to engage politicians, policy makers, healthcare professionals, educators and activists in this discussion.

#### What can you do?

Become a member of Abortion Rights ([www.abortionrights.org.uk](http://www.abortionrights.org.uk)) and affiliate your branch. We already have 100 national trade unions and 13 CWU branches affiliated, but if your branch isn't affiliated make sure you raise it at your next meeting. We can provide speakers and model motions.

Organise a discussion, fringe meeting or film showing with Abortion Rights.

Contact your MP to let them know your pro-choice views. Many MPs tell us they think the issue is unpopular in their constituency, so we need more people letting their representatives know they support a women's right to choose safe, free, legal abortions.

● Follow us on Twitter @Abortion\_Rights and on Facebook. Contact us at [choice@abortionrights.org.uk](mailto:choice@abortionrights.org.uk) or 020 7923 9792.

judgement based on weighing up risks rather than specifying particular circumstances in which abortion would be legal. The Act gave the rights and responsibility for decision making to doctors, not women.

Abortion is also subject to criminal and procedural restrictions as compared to other health procedures and abortion is still registered under the UK's Offences Against Person Act 1861. Meanwhile in Northern Ireland all women are denied the right to choice and access to NHS abortions in England.

In the half century since the Abortion Act, abortion rights campaigners' role has been one of custodians, fighting off the countless attacks which

threaten to roll back the clock on women's reproductive rights. These have been attempts to limit the scope and access of the law on abortion.

#### Our successes:

We were reminded again that we must remain vigilant, as in February there was yet another attack on women's reproductive freedom prevented.

Tory MP and chairperson of the All-Party Pro-Life group, Fiona Bruce, attempted to pass a Trojan horse amendment to the Serious Crime Bill, which Abortion Rights believe was a stealth attempt to undermine the 1967 Abortion Act and

# WOMEN FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

## PART 1: EDUCATORS

In this new four-part feature, **Pauline Granstan** explores the lives of inspirational women from across the world. Starting with women as ‘Educators’, prepare to be inspired...

Learning is the keystone to progress, unlocking people’s potential and providing skills and confidence to achieve.

The following short synopses show how women from each continent of the globe have used their influence to raise awareness and empower others to move away from their comfort zone which in turn is bringing about change in their society.

“These women have used their influence to raise awareness and empower others to move away from their comfort zone”

### African leader

Our African leader is from Sudan. Hadeel Ibrahim (b.1983) the founding Executive Director of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, established to support leadership and governance in Africa. She serves on a number of national and international bodies e.g. Amnesty International, and the British Council Provocation Group; a youth-led development agency. Ms Ibrahim is a business woman,

Right (clockwise from top left): From Pakistan Malala Yousafzai, Jamaica home of Miss Lou, from Saudi Arabia Ameerah Al-Taweel Al-Otaibi, Europe home of Countess Dora Russell, American Helen Adams Keller, and from Sudan Hadeel Ibrahim

however she uses her influence to support job seekers and employers through tertiary education and training programmes.

### American miracle worker

Our American miracle worker is Helen Adams Keller (b.1880 – d.1968) a prolific author, political activist and lecturer. Being deaf and blind by the age of eighteen months posed a number of communication challenges for her. Determined and hard working, Helen mastered sign language. Her career catapulted into an international one, including a 40,000 mile trek of Asia helping others with similar disabilities. In 1924 she became a member of the American Federation for the Blind. Helen’s accomplishments are vast and include the posthumous honour of a stamp issued in 1980 by the United States Postal Service.

### Asian pride

Our Asian pride is Malala Yousafzai (b.1997) from Pakistan who became global news in 2012 because she spoke against those who opposed girls’ education in her country. Malala wanted to be a doctor but became a political activist as a means of



Image: By Southbank Centre via Wikimedia Commons



Image: Yanki Chauranya/Shutterstock.com

highlighting the challenges faced by families trying to educate their daughters. Death threats and the life-threatening injury she sustained in 2012 did not deter her. The goodwill of the international community came to Malala’s aide when she was shot in 2012. She recovered sufficiently to carry on her work and in 2014 Malala became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.

### European reformer

Our European reformer is Countess Russell – Dora Russell (b.1894 – d.1986) from Britain, the second wife of the philosopher Bertrand Russell. Dora came from an upper-middle class background. She received some of the best



education of her time. Dora joined the Heretics Society in 1909 as she began questioning traditional authorities and religious dogma, particularly the role of women in marriage and the sexual relationship between the sexes. Dora believed in the right of women to have free birth control methods. She was an educator and influential role model at Beacon Hill School from 1927 and during World War II. Later in life she advocated the peace movement and is one of the founding members of the Campaign Against Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

**Latin American and Caribbean poet**

Our Latin American and Caribbean poet is Louise

Simone Bennett-Coverley (Miss Lou – b.1919 – d.2006) from Jamaica, known throughout the Jamaican diaspora as a folklorist. She received many government awards including the Order of the British Empire and Member of the Jamaican Order of Merit for her invaluable and distinguished contribution to the development of the Arts and Culture. One of Miss Lou’s most influential recordings has been sung by Harry Belafonte and is known as “Day-O” or the “Banana Boat Song”.



**70%**

of girls worldwide are not enrolled in secondary school

**Middle Eastern princess advocate**

Our Middle Eastern princess advocate is Ameerah Al-Taweel Al-Otaibi (b.1983 -) from Saudi Arabia. HRH is vice-chairperson and head of the executive committee of the Alwaleed bin Talal Foundation in Saudi Arabia. The foundation supports women’s empowerment and projects aimed at alleviating poverty and disaster. Ameerah supports women’s right to drive in Saudi Arabia and has made a number of important appearances and initiatives on behalf of women in the Middle East and North Africa.

● Part 2: ‘Women in a man’s world’ will feature in the next edition of *Women’s Talk*.

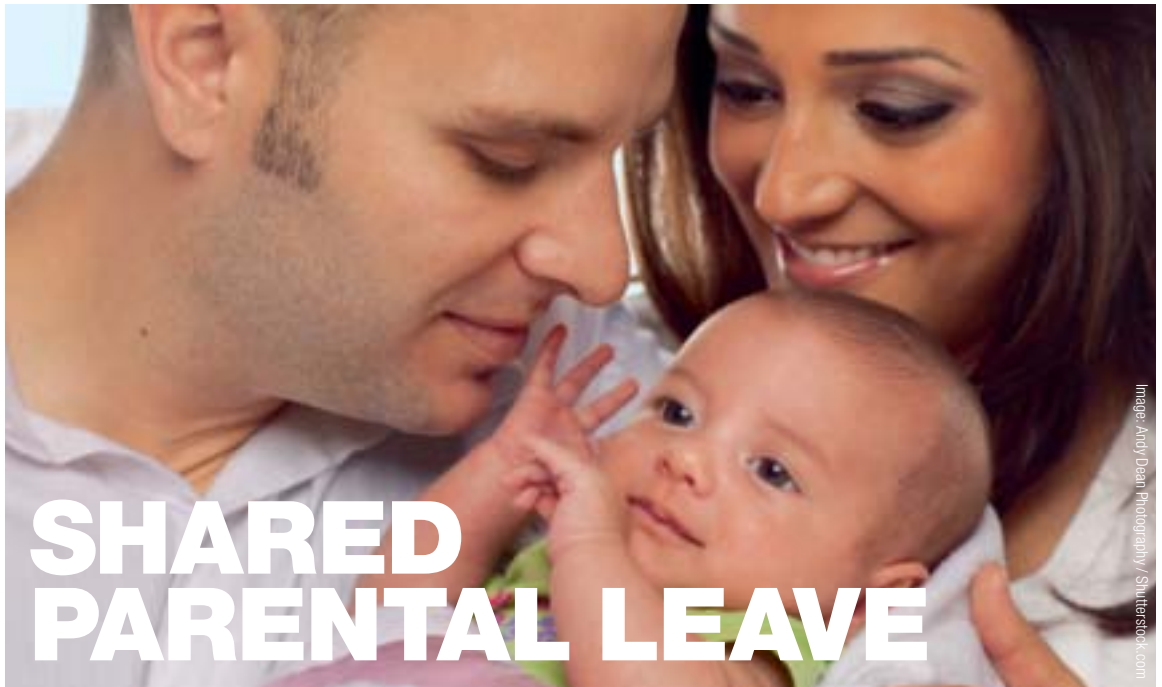


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# SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

What does the new Shared Parental Leave legislation mean for mothers and their partners and is it something which really benefits working mums?

**E**arlier this year Shared Parental Leave and Pay (ShPL and ShPP) came into effect for people having or adopting a baby on or after 5 April 2015.

There are three key changes: firstly that the mother can give some of her leave to her eligible partner (husband, civil partner, father of the child or live-in partner); secondly that both the mother and partner can take that leave either at the same time and/or separately; and finally that the mother can have a flexible return to work by taking up to three blocks of ShPL within the first year of her child's life once maternity leave is ended. Mothers' rights to maternity leave remain unchanged, this is an optional change.

All mothers are entitled to 52 weeks' maternity leave and have to take at least two

weeks off after the birth, but can now choose to take the remaining 50 weeks as ShPL and 37 weeks as ShPP. It's worth noting that Statutory Maternity Pay is paid at 90% of your wage for the first six weeks before reverting to a flat rate of £138.18 a week whereas ShPP is simply the flat rate or 90% of your wage – paying whichever is lowest.

“This new legislation is a step in the right direction but really the government needs to make it worth people's while”

Your company's maternity pay policy may be better than this statutory minimum so you should also bear that in mind.

The new ShPL means that a mother can choose to end her maternity leave early, switch

**Above: The all important parental bonding time of the first year of a baby's life**

to ShPL and give some or all of her leave to her partner. For example, she could take a month off with her partner after the birth, return to work while he continues on ShPL and then take another block of ShPL herself, perhaps after a busy period at work. This flexible approach lasts throughout the first year of the child's life.

CWU equality officer Linda Roy said: “This new legislation is a step in the right direction but really the government needs to make it worth people's while. There won't be many families who would be financially better off under this new arrangement so if we want to see truly better equality when it comes to childcare the money element needs to be enhanced.”

● For more information visit: [www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay/overview](http://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay/overview)