

# **Women officers in Unite: an ONC report**

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# Women officers in Unite: an ONC report

## 1 Executive summary

This report is based on a two-stage research project commissioned by the Unite Officers National Committee (ONC): a web-based survey of women officers and 12 telephone-based case study interviews. It explores the working lives of women officers, including the interface between their work and family life and their day-to-day experiences supporting members and reps.

The report makes a number of recommendations to the union (the ONC, HR and the senior management team) for negotiating priorities, including the introduction of lone working/personal safety guidelines, training and awareness raising around Unite's own employment policies, measures to address workplace stress/support for employees with family responsibilities, and the introduction of a clear, comprehensive induction process.

Key findings and recommendations are set out below (other recommendations appear in section 9, p.38):

- i. **Work allocation and support:** a large majority of women officers feel their current work allocation is fair in terms of the number of recognised and unrecognised workplaces they are expected to cover. But some women officers feel the current process for allocating work lacks transparency and operates at the whim of the regional secretary. Sixty percent of women officers feel supported by their immediate line managers but one third do not agree that line managers support them. Almost 40% do not feel able to discuss work concerns with their first line manager. The majority of women officers agree that Unite colleagues and ONC reps are supportive and interested in what they do; however, nearly 40% also believe that talking about their work concerns is viewed by some colleagues and the organisation as a "weakness".

*Recommendation:* Negotiating bodies should clarify/discuss the process for determining or changing an officer's work allocation with the aim of ensuring that a transparent standardised process operates across the regions.

- ii. **Unsocial hours and work-related driving:** all women officers work unsocial hours, most commonly late evening working. A large majority of Unite women officers (80%) work alone and, even when working with other officers, usually find they are the only woman officer at meetings. Only one woman officer does not use a car for work and over 40% spent between 21 and 40 hours driving for work in the month leading up to the survey.

*Recommendation:* The introduction of guidelines on lone/safe working. See recommendation **ix** below.

- iii. **Work/life balance:** slightly over one third of women officers believe unsocial hours working “significantly” affects their work/life balance and one third “struggle” to achieve any sort of balance between working for Unite and their life outside the union. Three-quarters of those reporting they struggle to achieve a balance have not raised the issue with their manager. Officers are split evenly in how effective they believe Unite is in supporting them to balance work and other commitments.

*Recommendation:* The union needs to look at introducing best practice policies to support employees with family responsibilities as this emerges as an issue of key concern to women officers and will also be relevant to male officers with family responsibilities.

- iv. **Policies and procedures:** just over three-quarters of women officers are aware of Unite policies on grievances/disciplinary action, equal opportunities and sickness absence, but only around one-third have actually read them. Officers are unclear about the existence or content of other policies, including any covering part-time and flexible working and the right to request special leave.

*Recommendations:*

- a. There does not appear to be a comprehensive officer induction process in place. This issue needs addressing, perhaps exploring the introduction of mentors for new women officers.
- b. The ONC might press the union to carry out an awareness-raising programme around its own policies and procedures, particularly during inductions.
- c. HR should also ensure that existing policies are implemented effectively, for example, by monitoring and auditing the impact of changes in policies and practices on particular groups in the workforce, including women.

- v. **Hostile working environment:** almost 70% of women officers report they have experienced hostility at work because they are women. In most cases, hostility has been experienced “a few times” and most frequently takes the form of people adopting an aggressive stance towards them. In 70% of cases, women believe that members are primarily responsible for generating the hostility they experience.

- vi. **Bullying and harassment:** just over half of women officers have raised a bullying or harassment issue with the union in the past five years and, in half of these cases, do not believe that the issue was handled at all well. Almost 40% of women officers have felt frightened at work because of a real or threatened incident.

*Recommendation:* The work-related training needs of women officers should be evaluated by HR: officers raised a number of potential areas where they feel training would be beneficial, for example, unconscious bias training, mental health first aid and managing potentially hostile/violent situations at work.

- vii. **Stress at work:** 70% of women officers report that they have received no stress awareness training in the past two years; one fifth have taken time off work sick in the past 18 months that they attribute to work-related stress. Very few officers have used the union's occupational health services for a mental health-related issue and almost 60% are not aware that the union provides access to counselling.

*Recommendation:* Many officers are unaware/not clear about the existence of certain employer-provided benefits, including access to occupational health and counselling. The ONC might press the union to carry out an awareness-raising initiative.

- viii. **Isolation at work:** almost 16% of women officers feel "very isolated" at work and a further 42.9% are "slightly" isolated, often because they are the only women in their office or district. Women in the telephone interviews report that being the only woman tends to reinforce "traditional" work demarcations and behaviours. However, others commented on how a growth in the recruitment of women officers in recent years was helping to change this situation.

*Recommendation:* Explore establishing a Unite-wide women officers' network and less formal ways of encouraging women in neighbouring regions/offices to collaborate and network.

- ix. **Personal safety and working alone:** 96% of women officers have received no guidance or training on staying safe whilst working alone, off-site or whilst travelling on Unite business. Three-quarters of women officers feel comfortable giving out their telephone number to a member or rep, accepting it is part of the job, but half do report problems as a result. In most cases, problems relate to being called at inconvenient times, although 30% have received offensive or upsetting calls. Home visits appear to be a grey area, with some officers reporting it is "policy" not to undertake them, whilst others state that they do visit members at home, for example, to support them in a capability hearing.

*Recommendation:* The union should, as a matter of urgency, agree comprehensive guidance on keeping employees safe when working alone (covering home visits, off-site visits, car use, telephone safety, working after dark and union provision of personal protective equipment and personal alarms).

- x. **Complaints and grievances:** 80% of women officers report that a complaint has been made about them by a member, a rep or a member's employer and just over a third believe that the complaint was made because they are a woman. 16.2% of women officers have submitted a formal grievance to Unite in the past five years (or since they started work if they have less than five years' service). Three quarters of these grievances relate to bullying or harassment. The officers concerned are split evenly between those believing the outcome of the grievance process was satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and in 27.3% of cases, the grievance remains unresolved.

*Recommendation:* In view of the significant number of women officers taking out grievances, the union should review how it deals informally with officers' work concerns before they become formal grievances. It should also review how consistently the grievance process is being implemented across regions.

- xi. Getting better?** The largest group of women officers (42%) believe the working environment at Unite has stayed the same over the past five years, with equal proportions either side believing it has got better or worse. Most believe the ONC does a good job and support the exploration of a women officers' network.

## 2 Research brief and methodology

In January 2016 the Unite Officers National Committee (ONC) commissioned Jennifer Hurstfield and Sarah Silcox, independent researchers, to conduct research on the experiences of women officers working for the union. The aim of the project was to explore the views and experiences of women officers working for Unite. The findings from the research will be used to inform the ONC's discussions with the management on improving the lives of women officers.

It was agreed that the research should focus primarily on current and recent experiences – ie in the last five years – except when an individual's past experiences were continuing to have an impact.

The methodology for the project was in two stages:

- An online questionnaire, using the Survey Monkey software, to be sent to all officers.
- 12 in-depth telephone interviews to explore in more detail the issues covered in the online survey.

### *Online survey*

An initial draft of the survey questionnaire had been drawn up by the ONC before the researchers were commissioned. In conjunction with the ONC the researchers revised the questionnaire and the final version was agreed in February 2016.

The survey in its final form comprised 51 questions (Appendix 1). The questions were in sections including:

- Respondent's profile (age, caring responsibilities, working patterns).
- Job and working environment (work allocation, support at work, unsocial hours working etc).
- Experience of working at Unite (awareness of employment policies, and workplace issues such as bullying, harassment, isolation, safety at work and stress).
- Working with members, lay reps, activists and employers.

The questionnaire went "live" on the Survey Monkey website on 12 February 2016 and a link to the survey was emailed to a total of 76 officers. Two email reminders were sent out before the survey closed on 24 February 2016. All 76 officers completed the survey – a 100% response rate.

### *Telephone interviews*

Telephone interviews were conducted with a small sample of 12 officers to provide a more detailed view of their working experiences (Appendix 2, interview schedule).

Selection for the interviews was done partly at random from the ONC's list of officers and partly from the officers who volunteered by emailing their contact details to the

researchers. At the end of the online survey respondents who wished to take part in a telephone interview were asked to contact the researchers direct.

The decision was made not to select all the interviewees from the officers who volunteered. The rationale was that it was important to include some officers who might not have considered volunteering.

Initially six officers were selected at random from the list of all officers provided by the ONC. The six were invited by email to take part in a telephone interview. Of the six, one did not respond, but the other five agreed to be interviewed.

A total of 15 officers emailed the researchers with their contact details following completion of the online survey. Seven interviewees were selected from the 15 volunteers. Almost all the volunteers had provided their regional location and job title and the selection sought to achieve a spread of locations and job roles.

### *Confidentiality*

In all correspondence with Unite women officers, it was stressed that answers to the survey and the telephone interviews would be anonymised and that no individual officer would be able to be identified in the report. The online survey did not ask for any personal details, such as name, thereby ensuring that no questionnaire response could be linked to an individual. The telephone interviewees have been anonymised and in addition any information that could lead to their identification has been removed in the writing of this research report.

### *Research report structure*

This report provides a full analysis of the survey findings. In addition, we have drawn extensively from the telephone interviews to supplement the findings and provide further insight into some women's experiences. The report clearly indicates which quotes are from the interviewees and which are from the comments made in the online survey.

As the online survey achieved a 100% response rate, the findings from the online survey can be taken to be representative of Unite women officers. The small sample of 12 women officers who contributed telephone interviews cannot be regarded as representative of all officers, but their individual views and experiences provide further insight into the important issues raised by the survey findings.



### 3 Women officer profile

The survey asked a series of questions to provide a profile of the respondents with respect to: age, caring responsibilities, flexible working, length of service and working patterns and arrangements.

#### a) Age

The survey achieved a 100% response rate (76 responses). The sample (reflecting the total woman officer population) is skewed towards higher age groups:

- Almost half of officers are aged 45-54 (48.7%) and a further 29.7% are between the ages of 55 and 64.
- Less than 3% of the 74 officers responding to this part of the survey are aged 18-34.

Table A: age profile of women officers	
18-24 years of age	0.0% Number of women officers: 0
25-34 years of age	2.7% 2
35-44 years of age	17.6% 13
45-54 years of age	48.7% 36
55-64 years of age	29.7% 22
65 and over years of age	1.4% 1
Total	74

#### b) Caring responsibilities

"I received an email first thing this morning asking for officer support at a workplace demonstration at 6.30am tomorrow morning. I am expected to be there, at a meeting that has probably been in the pipeline for weeks but for which I did not get any notice. I have small children and this creates difficulties for me in terms of managing my caring responsibilities. I do not want or expect special treatment, just proper notice."  
(telephone interview)

- Over a third of women officers (36%) have no caring responsibilities.
- Almost 40% (38.6%) have child dependents, either at school or over school age.
- A sizeable 22.7% of the sample is responsible for a dependent parent.

<b>Table B: caring responsibilities</b>	
Dependent child/children under school age	13.3% Number of women officers: 10
Other dependent child/children	25.3% 19
Dependent parent/parents	22.7% 17
Dependent partner	8.0% 6
Other dependent adult	10.7% 8
I have no caring responsibilities	36.0% 27
Total Respondents: 75	

### c) *Working patterns and arrangements*

The survey asked women officers to describe their working patterns, for example, whether they work with members in particular sectors, or across particular locations, or have a mixture of both sectoral and geographic allocations:

- The largest single proportion of officers (34.2%) has an allocation based on one or more sectors. The telephone interviews show that the range of sectors covered by officers is wide, including passenger transport, not-for-profit organisations, construction, manufacturing, the NHS and telecommunications.
- The second most frequently cited work allocation (cited by just over a quarter of officers) is a mix of both sectors and locations.
- An officer's sectoral allocation tends to determine the gender mix of the membership covered, according to the telephone interviews. For example, women officers whose allocation includes a high proportion of manufacturing or transport employers, or organised workplaces in general, tend to represent a predominantly male membership. Officers with an allocation including NHS and/or not-for-profit organisations tend to have a more gender balanced membership. However, even in these sectors the reps tend to be male, according to participants in the telephone interviews.
- Just over 16% of officers have an allocation based purely on a particular geographic location.
- 17.8% of officers have a particular responsibility for areas including equality, legal, political or education issues. In some cases, their role is split 50/50 between a regional officer role and these additional responsibilities. The interviews suggest these split roles present particular pressures; one officer reporting that it is difficult to maintain a balance in the role because the regional officer part always wins, taking a disproportionate amount of her time: "I'm not going to stop attending meetings or dealing with reps; it's very difficult to say 'no'."

The survey also asked for information on formal flexible working arrangements and for details of the officers' length of service:

- Very few women have a formal agreement to work flexibly (5.5%). However, several in the survey commented that, although no formal arrangement exists, they are able to provide some flexibility by managing their own working time/diaries: for example, "I arrange my diary to suit my personal circumstances" and "I do not have an agreement as per the Regulations but I work flexible hours all the time."

The telephone interviews support this informal flexible working, although a number comment that it is hard to achieve in practice due to the unpredictable nature of the work and the inability to predict how long a particular task/meeting will take to complete.

- Long service is the norm amongst women officers: the largest proportion in the survey (39.1%) has worked for Unite (and its predecessor unions) for at least 15 years. At the other end of the service spectrum, almost 23% of officers have five years or less service, suggesting a relatively recent influx of women into officer roles.

## 4 Working for Unite

The survey asked respondents a series of questions about aspects of working for Unite. These included work allocations, unsocial hours, work-related driving and their awareness of the union's formal policies and procedures.

### A) Allocations and support at work

The survey asked women officers to indicate the extent to which they agreed with various statements on their work allocations and the support provided by their line manager.

On balance, women officers are more likely to agree that their work allocation is fair than disagree:

- 70% agree/strongly agree that their work allocation is a fair mix of recognised/unrecognised workplaces compared with 22% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing (8% did not respond).
- There is slightly less agreement that the balance in allocation between individual members and organised groups is fair: 63.8% agree/strongly agree that work allocation is fair in terms of its mix of individual members and organised groups.
- Women officers tend to agree that there is a fair mix of men and women in their work allocation (61.4% agree/agree strongly).

The comment of one officer in the survey illustrates a possible lack of transparency in the process for allocating work to officers of both sexes:

“One officer will be given not-for-profit, which is difficult to organise and does not offer great prospects for recruitment, while another will be given buses which brings new members in without any effort whatsoever from the regional officer. There may well be regional secretaries who give those male-dominated workforces to the men [officers] rather than the women. This has not happened in my region but at the same time I do not know what goes into the regional secretary's mind when making these decisions. Certainly, there is little consultation and these decisions are increasingly devolved to RCOs.”

On balance, women officers feel supported by their immediate line managers:

- 60% agree/strongly agree with the statement that they feel supported by their immediate line manager. One survey respondent comments: “I have not had cause to raise an issue but am confident in the support that would be offered.”
- However, one third (33.8%) disagree/disagree strongly with the statement that they feel supported by their manager. An officer in the survey writes: “Although I would use my immediate line manager for support with any 100% campaigns question, I would not feel able or comfortable raising any [issue] outside of this with them. I do not have the confidence in them that this would be handled in the right way.” Another reports: “My immediate line manager is not actually a line manager. It's the luck of the draw who you get.”

- Just over half agree/strongly agree that they are able to discuss work concerns with their line manager; however, 38.1% disagreed/disagreed strongly with this statement.

<b>Table C: work allocation and support</b>						
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
My work allocation is fair in that there is a mix of recognised and unrecognised workplaces	17.6% 12	52.9% 36	8.8% 6	13.2% 9	7.4% 5	68
My work allocation is fair in that there is a balance of organised groups and individual members	14.5% 10	49.3% 34	17.4% 12	11.6% 8	7.3% 5	69
My work allocation is fair in that it reasonably represents both male and female members	11.4% 8	50.0% 35	18.6% 13	8.6% 6	11.4% 8	70
I feel supported at work by my immediate line manager	32.4% 23	28.2% 20	23.9% 17	9.9% 7	5.6% 4	71
I feel able to discuss and be listened to about workload allocation issues by my immediate line manager	28.2% 20	26.8% 19	26.8% 19	11.3% 8	7.0% 5	71

This section of the survey elicited a large number of comments from women officers, which ranged widely in theme, but which can be grouped as follows:

*Management of allocations:*

“All officers, both men and women, have been expected to pick up additional workload as a result of the creation of RCOs and regional legal officer roles in recent years.”

“There is generally an issue with allocations in that the allocations are too large to manage properly. This is not isolated to just me.”

“There is no meeting of all officers to discuss strengths or weaknesses, which sector you are comfortable with and which you are not, and how to get the best for both you, your colleagues and the members. My line manager regularly changes my remit with absolutely no discussion or any consultation; you are handed your new portfolio and have to get on with it.”

“The regional secretary is my line manager but has not spoken to me directly for the past three years. I do have a supportive RCO who manages my allocation.”

“I strongly feel that if you complain about the allocation given it goes against you and then you are given the worst allocation possible. No one really cares.”

“My allocation has improved in the past 12 months. Prior to this it was unmanageable and I was overworked and stressed. My workload is manageable now.”

#### *Balancing allocations:*

“I have both equalities responsibility and several thousand members and it can be very challenging at times.”

“My allocation does not reflect my specialist role.”

“My allocation is a mixture of equalities and industrial and this means that I can't devote as much time as I'd like to develop the equalities area within the region as I'm constantly being asked to represent and advise individual members.”

“The majority of my allocation is in XXX plus some private sector organisations, where there is no recognition agreement so it means dealing with individual members. I took on a small allocation at XXX on the understanding that it would be under review. This has increased dramatically in heavy workload and I have mentioned this to my line manager but nothing has happened to date. I have raised this twice now at my one-to-one meetings.”

#### *Dealing with reps/absence of reps:*

“Dealing with male stewards who are sexist can be hard work and de-grading.”

“My allocation is a mixture of organised workplaces and workplaces that are fairly new to me that have reps who are not very confident, need more training but are not keen to take up training.”

“The main issue I have is that, even in recognised workplace, there are few if any reps and, because of my caseload ...I don't have time to make inroads into workplaces to encourage members to volunteer to be trained up as reps.”

## **B) Unsocial hours/driving/work-life balance**

The survey asked women officers to report on the unsocial hours they work, work-related driving and the extent to which they are supported to maintain a balance between their work and personal/family lives.

### *Unsocial hours*

All women officers work some unsocial hours, including early mornings, late evenings and weekends:

- Late evening working is the most frequently cited type of unsocial hours worked: almost 60% (59.2%) work evenings four or more times a month and 100% of officers work some late evenings.
- The telephone interviews suggest that evening working is often linked to a requirement to address branch meetings at workplaces operating shifts, particularly during disputes. In some cases, this requires officers to address up to four separate meetings across an extended working day at the same workplace in order to ensure that all shifts are covered.
- Women officers in the telephone interviews accept that, to some degree, this is the nature of representation work: “I signed up for the job and I understand the nature of the work”, as one interviewee explains. Another said that she does not want special treatment because of her caring duties, as officers who are fathers are in the same position, but that the union needs to take action to support all officers.
- Almost a fifth of women officers appear to work every weekend (18.6% of officers told us they work weekends “four or more” times a month on average). The survey did not explore the nature of this work, but the telephone interviews suggest that many officers will answer telephone calls/emails at weekends: “home-based unsocial hours working” as one describes it.
- Women officers work alone much of the time: more than four in five (85.7%) work alone. Even when working with other officers, women often or usually find they are the only woman officer at meetings (60.3% of this group are usually the only woman present). The telephone interviews suggest that this combination of lone working and often being the only woman in the work environment (including the Unite office in some cases) contributes to feelings of isolation (see “isolation” section below).
- Almost a third of women officers (32.4%) regularly work away from home overnight (that is, at least once a month) and over half (59.2%) spend a few nights away each year (less than six nights a year). The telephone interviews suggest that a common reason for spending a night away from the home base is to attend national meetings, demonstrations and training events. Only 7% of officers never spend a night away from home as part of their job.
- When working away from home overnight, 52.9% of women officers are with other Unite officers or staff “most” or “all” of the time. However, a sizeable 37.1% of officers told us that they are “hardly ever” with other Unite personnel when required to spend a night away from home on work duties.

## *Work/life balance*

Half of officers believe the requirement to work unsocial hours “slightly” affects the balance they are able to achieve between work and personal life.

- However, over a third (35.7%) believe unsocial hours working “significantly” affects work-life balance.

Almost 60% of women officers are able to achieve a good work/life balance “usually” or “most” of the time.

- However, one third “struggle” to achieve a balance and 7.3% are not able to achieve a balance. One survey respondent told us: “I have raised issues with workload and, in particular, problems with caring responsibilities and, whilst sympathy was expressed, nothing practical was done.”

“This [work/life balance] is an issue for me and I have raised the issue in the past and action was taken. But I do believe that officers need to be available 24/7, even though this affects relationships with partners and kids. I can’t expect the regional secretary to do much more, other than employ more officers, which isn’t down to them.” (Telephone interview)

Employer support for work/life balance:

- Around three quarters (74.5%) of those reporting that they struggle to balance their work/personal lives have not raised the issue with their manager/Unite.
- Respondents are divided fairly evenly in their views on the effectiveness of Unite in supporting work/personal life balance; 37.1% report the union is “not at all good” in this respect, while 41.4% report it is “very” or “quite good.” One officer who had raised issues around early morning/late night working with her manager was advised to “improve your time management.” Another told us in her survey comments: “If we raise issues about how difficult it is to fit all the work in a reasonable time we are told to time manage better.”

## *Work-related driving*

Work-related driving is common amongst women officers: 67.6% use a car “all of the time” as part of their work, with one telephone interviewee describing using her car “as a bit of an office.” A further fifth use a car “most of the time” and only one officer told us that she does not travel for work:

- The largest proportion of officers in the survey (42%) reported they drove between 100 and 1,000 miles in the month preceding the survey.
- Over 40% (43.3%) of officers spent 21-40 hours in work-related driving in the month leading up to the survey period. Just over 10% reported driving for more than 80 hours in the month leading up to the survey.



- Estimates of annual work-related miles driven ranged widely, with a handful of officers reporting they drove 25,000-30,000 miles in the last 12 months.

“We are given a sectoral allocation which does not take into consideration the geographical spread of said allocation. It can mean travelling huge distances a day. Unnecessary, long, dead hours in a car when calls cannot be made and correspondence not dealt with, adding to the pressure. There is also pressure to take calls in the car and this has never been dealt with by a risk assessment. Officers from different ‘districts’ will cross each other on the motorway, travelling to workplaces in each other’s ‘districts’.” (Telephone interview)

### **C) Policies and procedures**

The survey asked women officers about a range of formal policies, guidance and training issues.

#### *i) Unite Policies*

Women officers were asked to indicate their awareness of four Unite policies: Equal Opportunity (EO) Policy, Grievance Policy, Disciplinary Policy and the Absence Management Policy and Procedure. Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they had read each of these policies. A total of 67 respondents out of 76 (88%) answered the question.

- Officer awareness of all four employment-related policies is high at between 75% and 78%.
- However, far fewer officers have actually read the policies: just over a third had read the EO, Grievance and Disciplinary policies. A slightly higher proportion (41%) reported reading the absence management one.

Women were also asked whether they had received any specific guidance from management on working safely off-site, at home, on their own, or whilst travelling to and from work.

- Only three officers reported that they had received any guidance from management on staying safe whilst working alone, off-site or whilst travelling: over 95% reported they had received no guidance/training in this area.

A further question asked whether officers had received stress awareness training in the last two years.

- Over two-thirds of officers (70.6%) reported that they have received no stress awareness education/training in the past two years.

The telephone interviews also explored the women officers’ awareness and knowledge of the union’s employment related policies. Those who were aware of the policies were also asked how effective the union was in implementing these policies. Some interviewees commented that the induction process did not really provide enough information on the policies for new employees:

- “I do not know and have not read the policies, despite the fact that these are the kind of issues I deal with everyday at our members’ workplaces! I do not know where they are kept – they don’t seem to be in an obvious place. There is no induction process for new officers, which is when you’d typically be directed to the policies.”
- “I’ve never been given any of the policies as an officer myself.”
- “Until I completed the online survey I did not even know there is a [grievance] procedure! I do not even know how to access the staff handbook: we’re told it’s on the intranet, but not told how to access it. I know there are some bits in my employment contract, but it’s not made easy to work out where everything is.”

These are some of the interviewees’ comments about specific policies:

#### *Equal opportunities policy*

- “I didn’t even know about the policy. It is a piece of paper. Nothing strategic is being done about equal opportunities.”
- “I’d like to say I’ve seen it, but I haven’t.”
- “Is there one?”
- “This is read out at conferences just to cover the union for incidents when drunken delegates or officers inevitably behave inappropriately the following evening. The union will not train officers and staff on what these policies mean in practice, so that people still think it is acceptable to make racist comments and call black people ‘coloured’.”

#### *Grievance and disciplinary policies*

- “There is no consistency in implementation. Somebody will have a good experience – although from feedback very few. And some women have had a very difficult time going through the grievance structure [procedure].”
- “I think the implementation is mixed. I’m not sure how good the union is in supporting their own workforce, although we support people in other workplaces.”
- “The policies are good and we were consulted on them.”
- “The union is not very good at dealing with officers’ issues in an informal way before they get serious, leaving officers with no choice but to take out a formal grievance.”

#### *Absence Management Policy and Procedure*

- “The policy was issued without any management guidelines on what, for example, a back-to-work interview should cover. We need to look at well-being more generally.”
- “We are good at it, especially where people are seriously ill. This is one area where we come up trumps. We’ve lost colleagues to cancer and this has been managed well.”
- “I am aware of it having had a day off sick. I probably know more about my workplaces’ sickness policies than my own.”

ii) *Guidelines on lone working*

None of the telephone interviewees was aware of any guidelines or protocol concerning lone working. Many commented that they had picked up from colleagues that they were not supposed to visit members' homes alone, but did not think this was written down anywhere. Several also contrasted the lack of a policy with policies in the workplaces they were responsible for:

- "There is no policy in place with respect to lone working, at least to my knowledge. There is nothing set up to protect us, although it is something we would draft in a workplace. The union as an employer needs to be more pro-active with policies and procedures."
- "There are no guidelines and all the advice I have received has come anecdotally from other officers."
- "I risk manage myself. There is no policy."
- "There is no guidance or training on safe practices when working alone – we're just expected to use our common sense."

A frequent issue raised by interviewees was that they wanted the union's policies and procedures to match – at least – those that they were negotiating in their role as ROs, but that the union was currently lagging behind.

## 5 Wellbeing and the working environment

The working environment can pose a number of challenges for ROs and the survey sought to explore five key areas: hostility at work; bullying and harassment; stress and health at work; isolation; and personal safety.

### A) Hostile working environment

The survey asked whether in the course of their work as an officer, respondents have ever experienced a hostile environment because they were women.

Of the 69 officers who responded to this question, 68% have experienced a hostile working environment. One fifth (20.3%) have not experienced hostility and a further 8.7% responded “don’t know.”

The majority of women who have experienced hostility report that this has happened “a few times” (70.8%), followed by 18.7% stating it happens “frequently” and 6.3% who report they have experienced this “once.”

The type of hostility experienced ranges from working with people who adopt an aggressive stance and/or being made to feel uncomfortable (both cited by the largest group), through verbal abuse of a non-sexual nature (reported by almost half of the 49 officers responding to this question) to verbal abuse of a sexual nature (reported by 22.5%):

Table D: hostility at work	
Verbal abuse of a non-sexual nature	46.9% 23
Verbal abuse of a sexual nature	22.5% 11
Aggressive stance	65.3% 32
I was made to feel uncomfortable	65.3% 32
I felt threatened	26.5% 13
Other form of hostile behaviour	32.7% 16
Total Respondents: 49	

Almost a third (32.7%) responded that they had experienced “other” forms of hostile behaviour, including:

- “Dismissing my contribution and only addressing the men in the room. Made me feel very angry.”

- “Belittled in front of reps; spoken about in a derogatory manner in front of reps.”
- “Racism.”
- “I have been sexually assaulted by a senior officer in the past. I have been patted on the head by an officer and I have been threatened by other officers in the past.”
- “Refused to have me represent them because I am a woman and ‘wouldn’t understand’.”
- “Attempt to side-line me by going over my head to a male officer.”
- “Offensive material left on my desk; my files have been hidden.”
- “Often I’m the only woman at meetings and have had to put up with offensive remarks. Whilst I have pointed out how I feel about these, no leadership is shown in making clear to the perpetrator that these are not acceptable. I have been in a situation where I was told all I need was a good \*\*\*\*.”

The survey also asked those who had experienced hostility at work who they feel was primarily responsible for generating the hostile environment. Respondents were able to tick as many categories of individual as applied from a list:

- The largest group (70.6%) of officers believe that Unite members were primarily responsible for generating the hostility they experienced.
- More than one-third (37.2%) cited lay reps.
- Almost 30% reported that managers within the union were responsible for generating hostility and 21.2% felt that managers within the members’ workplace were responsible.
- Just under a quarter (23.5%) cited other Unite colleagues.
- One officer said that reps from other unions were responsible for the hostile behaviour she has faced.

## **B) Bullying and harassment**

The survey asked women officers whether they had ever raised an issue relating to their welfare at work, including bullying, harassment or work-related stress, in the past five years.

- Of the 71 officers who responded, slightly over half (56.3%) reported raising an issue of this kind with the union in the past five years.
- Of this group, almost half (48.9%) reported that the issue, once raised, was handled “not at all well.” Just over a quarter (27.6%) said that the welfare issue they raised was handled “reasonably” or “very well.” (23.4% ticked “no response” to this question).

Another question asked whether the respondent had ever felt frightened whilst working as an officer because of a real incident or threat of harassment.

- Nearly two out of five respondents (38.8%) said that they had felt frightened, compared with 61.2% who had not.
- Of those who had felt frightened, the majority (21 respondents) said this had occurred once or twice, compared with a small minority (four respondents) who said it had happened a few times.

The telephone interviews explored women officers' views on how effectively Unite deals with the issue of bullying or harassment. One concern raised was that how a complaint about bullying or harassment was dealt with could depend on the status of the people involved. But there was also a perception that there had been some improvement in the past few years in the response to complaints. Below are some comments from individual officers:

- “How it is dealt with depends on who is doing the bullying. An officer being bullied by a lay member is dealt with differently from in the office, where the issue isn't really recognised.”
- “If I put in a complaint about my line manager, I don't know how that would be taken because of their standing. If it was a colleague, they would go ‘oh yes, absolutely.’ It depends who you are, what it was about and who you are talking about.”
- “It hasn't been effective in the past. But now something is happening and issues are being raised. The Sally Naillard case had an impact in raising awareness.”
- “About eight years ago the response from management was appalling, but I think it is better now. In our region, because of the managerial style of the person who heads up the region, it has improved.”
- “If I was really suffering as a result of being bullied by my line manager, I would not get anywhere with a complaint, which would more likely end up with a settlement agreement.”
- “Previously Unite was not very good. But now it depends on who deals with it. The line managers are usually good and supportive; above them, some of the Regional Secretaries have not been good at dealing with concerns. It varies.”

### **C) Stress and health at work**

The survey asked women officers whether they had taken any time off work in the past 18 months due to work-related stress and, separately, whether they had used the Unite occupational health services for a mental health issue at any point in the past five years.

- One fifth (20.3%) of officers responding to the question had taken time off work sick in the past 18 months that they attribute to work-related stress.
- Only a small proportion of officers (8.7%) have used the union's occupational health services for a mental health-related issue in the past five years. Views on the effectiveness of this service amongst the small number using it are split equally between those reporting it helped them a great deal, moderately or not at all.
- A significant proportion of women officers (57.1%) are not aware of the existence of the union-sponsored counselling service. The telephone interviews support this finding, with one commenting “It was only by doing this survey that I found out we had a counselling line!” Another suggests that the lack of awareness extends to the wider occupational health service: “I sort of knew that occupational health exists but wouldn't know how to access it if I needed to.” Similarly, another said: “I had no idea that we have access to occupational health or counselling in some circumstances.”
- All five of the officers accessing the counselling service in the past five years found it helped their situation “moderately” or “a great deal.”

The telephone interviews explored women officers' experiences of stress at work, their views on the causes and possible solutions. These are some of the comments from individual officers:

- “Work can be stressful, due to the sheer amount of work and the type of work we do, going in at critical times in an organisation such as a dispute or redundancy situation.”
- “The job can be stressful and sometimes I get ‘brain overload’ when I get to the end of a working day but still have stuff hanging over me; you feel like you’re drowning”
- “Most of this stress comes from trying to prioritise my work when I’m told that ‘everything’ is a priority. We do talk about this at officers’ meetings, but we’re all in the same position so it’s not really easy to find a solution. We did a time management course, which was good, but there was no follow up so I’ve quickly lapsed back into my old ways.”
- “It is the peaks and troughs that make it stressful. For example, at this time of the year the not-for-profit organisations find out if they’ve got funding for next year, leading to lots of anxiety around redundancy in a non-organised sector with no reps. This means lots of individual representation work.”
- “Everyone wants something from you, all of the time and immediately. I might be putting stress on myself, but only because it’s important and members have expectations. Also, it’s always negative stuff we’re dealing with, fighting to keep members’ jobs and terms and conditions, not improving them.”
- “Things have got better; the pattern of officers dropping dead within six months of retiring seems to have been broken but we still need a more strategic/preventative approach to stress.”
- “It’s too easy to label everything as ‘stress’.”
- “I find this survey patronising and offensive. The job can be stressful but, in my opinion it is equally so for males and females. I have always been supported by successive regional secretaries.”

Women officers spoke about various training courses they have attended to help them manage their own stress at work, and to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems facing their members. Several mentioned that this training, although effective in building individual resilience, does not tackle the wider, organisational sources of work-related stress, including high workload and demand. For example, “Training courses on workload and stress have been introduced, but going on courses doesn’t reduce the level of work which is one of the main causes of stress.”

The effectiveness of an individual’s line manager (typically regional secretary, but also including RCOs) in dealing with a stress or mental health issue varies, according to the telephone interview sample. One woman officer who raised a stress issue related to overload received a good level of support and follow-up action. However, another officer feels that even those in management roles are limited in what they can do: “What can they do? They can’t take work away.”

“There are stress training courses but that is where you encounter the comments from men, like ‘you just have to get on with it’. That is the culture. You go home and have a few drinks to unwind. The macho culture is not there with all the officers I speak to, but it is an underlying part of the culture. How do you fight that? We get comments like ‘oh well, you’re a woman, you can’t take it’. The stress is detrimental to men as well and I’ve seen it in male members too.” (Survey comment)

## D) Isolation

The role of regional officer involves a high degree of working alone for both men and women. The survey asked whether any women officers feel isolated in the workplace due to the fact that they are women.

Almost 16% of women officers feel “very” isolated at work. The largest proportion (42.9%) feel “slightly” isolated; 30% do not feel isolated and 11.4% did not respond to this question. In their survey comments, some women focused on their experiences among colleagues; others on experiences in the workplaces they were allocated. This part of the survey elicited a high number of comments, from 29 out of 76 officers.

### *Isolation in the office*

Many women officers at Unite feel isolated, often because they are the only women in their office/district which affects the workplace dynamic and reinforces “traditional” demarcations and behaviours:

- “I have to sit amongst colleague officers who refer to our secretaries as ‘the girls’, have no idea what it is like to be a woman, have no concept of equalities, think that it is correct to refer to black people as ‘coloured’, talk about ‘chairmen’, refer to a woman as ‘a piece of skirt’, take half days which are effectively full days’ leave so they can play golf and discuss work and develop ideas on the golf course which are then presented at cluster meetings, are so bloody used to never having to work with women that they do not have a clue how to work with women.”
- “Some of my colleagues have ‘blokey chats’, especially on a Friday afternoon or Monday morning. I have never been included.”

### *Isolation in the workplace*

Several women officers commented in the survey that they were often the only woman in a meeting:

- “I have to work in very male dominated industries, and quite often am the only woman present at meetings.”
- “I was at a meeting with over 90 men just last week and I was the only female in the room. The language was disgusting and the threatening and intimidating behaviour was outrageous. I was on my own and had no one to support me or to bring these members into line.”
- “I work alone, often dealing with men. I have had sexual comments made, including ‘Well I’d f\*\*\* you’.”
- “Men tend to dominate any debate, hogging the agenda at meetings.”



One woman officer described how the growth in the number of women officers in recent years has improved her situation:

- “Sometimes the reps are all male in meetings and in the beginning they don’t trust you because you are a woman and they think that you cannot understand their work. It takes a while to establish yourself. This also happened when I first became an officer, as there were so few women. This is becoming better now.”

## **E) Personal safety and working alone**

As reported in the section on policies and procedures in the previous chapter, none of our telephone interviewees reported having seen, or being aware of, any union guidelines on personal safety in the workplace or when working alone. In the survey, the majority of women officers (61.2%) reported that they have not felt frightened whilst working as an officer for Unite because of a real incident or threat of harassment; however, this leaves almost 40% who do report fear. In the majority of cases, these women have only felt frightened once or twice; no officers reported being frightened “frequently.”

### *i) Telephone usage*

The survey probed on how comfortable women officers feel about giving their telephone number to a member or rep. Nearly half (47.6%) feel “quite comfortable”; a quarter feel “completely comfortable”, and one in five are “not at all comfortable.”

One officer responded: “I am always available, that is my job. If people take on this job they have to be committed.” Another wrote: “This has never occurred or is even an issue for me.”

A follow up question asked whether the officer had ever had a problem as a result of giving her telephone number to a member or rep as part of the job. Just over half of women (54.5%) report that they have had a problem as a result of handing out their telephone number.

In the largest group of cases, problems relate to being called at inconvenient times despite informing people of their availability (reported by 75% of officers). 30% of women had received offensive or upsetting calls.

Examples provided to the survey by women officers who have had problems relating to disclosing telephone numbers include:

- “I always give my mobile phone number to reps, and explain I am happy they call me as-and-when needed. It's when my number becomes available more widely that I have had problems.”
- “Constant text messages, some in a suggestive manner.”
- “Stressed members keeping me on the phone, and then accuse me of not listening when I want to terminate the call.”

- “I am happy to give reps my phone number, but not members. Due to them calling you at all hours of the day or night, more often than not, drunk or passing their phones to the partners, who can get very aggressive and abusive. Some men in particular believe that being a union member means that they have the right to be aggressive with you.”
- “Constant calls from the same member, bordering on harassment.”
- “Sexually threatening calls of an abusive nature in the middle of the night.”
- “I purposely avoid giving my number out to members to avoid unwelcome calls. Happy to circulate to reps though.”
- “Calls that took up at least four minutes of my voicemail and said nothing ...just quiet with background noise.”
- “Members calling late at night when drunk. Then becoming aggressive when you advise it's late at night.”
- “Had a stalker.”

60% of officers who have had problems as a result of providing their telephone numbers to members/reps have not raised it with their manager.

Of the 19 respondents who sought support from a manager, the majority (14 respondents) reported that the manager had been very or slightly responsive; in two cases the manager had not been at all supportive; and in three cases the manager did not respond at all.

#### *ii) Lone working*

The telephone interviewees raise a number of different safety issues. Several spoke about safety concerns in the context of working late alone in their office:

- “I can be the only person in the building at night. I’m not sure how secure the building is. There is no security on duty and no one available or any number to call. I’ve seen no protocols of how to keep yourself safe.”
- “We do work alone and do have concerns about our safety, but see it as part of the job. I work in an office ... and am often there after dark. I have developed my own procedures for closing up at night in order to protect myself, such as remotely closing the office shutters from the safety of my own car.”
- “I refuse to work alone in the building. I go when the secretary goes.”

The interviewees also spoke about their concerns attending workplace meetings at night:

- “I regularly have to think about my own safety and assess the risk, for example when visiting a new workplace for the first time, and attending meetings late at night on remote, badly lit industrial estates. I’m always aware of my environment, but other than having a body guard all the time, I’m not sure what we can do. I carry a personal alarm – a present from another woman officer.”

- “I feel more concerned parking my car on my way into a site, where often there are very few people around.”

*iii) Home visits*

Visiting members in their homes was another area where safety issues were raised. Some interviewees were categorical that they would not go into a member’s home alone. Others did occasionally meet in a member’s home after careful consideration. But none of the interviewees were aware of any union guidelines on the matter. The variety of responses is shown in these comments:

- “I never go into members’ homes, except in rare cases when a capability hearing is being heard there, but only if there is a manager present – which there always is in the case of a capability hearing.”
- “I attended a meeting at a member’s house with another member, which turned very hostile, not against me but it was a very difficult meeting. I learned not to do home meetings unaccompanied.”
- “There is no guidance or training on safe practices. I used to go to members’ houses for meetings until a colleague told me it is not safe. I ended up telling a lie to members that it is union policy not to meet in their homes.”
- “I do go into members’ homes alone, but I will always speak to the member first to try and organise to meet in a public place or at our offices. If I feel uncomfortable about going to someone’s house I would raise it with my manager, but I tend to assess risks myself.”
- “I do go into people’s homes if they are sick and can’t go out. I am not aware of any protocol or that we are not supposed to go alone into people’s homes.”
- “I am really careful and know how to look after myself, for example I never go into people’s homes, always meet in a public place. But I have not been given any guidance on this from the union.”
- “Apart from being told that I was not to make visits to members’ homes, there are no guidelines, or protocols that I am aware of. Even the bit about no home visits only arose because I asked, not because I was given any guidelines.”

## 6 Complaints and grievances

The survey asked women officers whether a complaint has ever been made against them, for example, by a member or a rep. It also explores whether women have raised formal grievances using the Unite grievance procedure and for information on the outcome of this process.

### A) Complaints against women officers

A large majority (80%) of women officers reported that a complaint (either formal or informal) has been made about them by a member, a rep or member's employer.

Of those officers reporting that a complaint had been made about them:

- just over a third (34.5%) believed or felt that a complaint was made because they are a woman;
- however, 36.2% do not believe being a woman had anything to do with a complaint being made; and
- 24.1% responded "don't know."

In the case of almost 70% (67.3%) of women officers reporting they had been the subject of a complaint, this was made by a member. In a further quarter of cases, the complaint was made by a rep, and in the remaining 9.1% of women officers, the complaint was made by a member's employer.

The telephone interviews provide a picture of how complaints arise and how some appear to be linked to the fact that the officer concerned is a woman.

One officer participating in the telephone interviews told us a group of reps approached the union management stating they did not want to be represented by her, with the result that her allocation was changed. Another told us that a manager at a workplace she represented had withdrawn a pay offer and told the reps it would not go back on the table until she apologised for some non-specific action; she believes this was done to purposely undermine her relationship with members at the workplace concerned and would not have happened had she been a man.

### B) Grievances

Slightly more than one in six (16.2%) women officers have submitted a formal grievance in the past five years (or since they started work as an officer if they have less than five years' service):

- In three quarters of these cases, the grievance related to an issue that the officer concerned describes as bullying or harassment.
- In 36.4% of cases the outcome of the grievance procedure is described as "partially" or "very" satisfactory;
- However, in an identical proportion (36.4%) of cases, the outcome was "not satisfactory."
- In 27.3% of cases, the grievance remains unresolved.

The telephone interviews explored the issue of grievances in more detail, asking women officers for their experiences of using the procedure, their understanding of how other women officers have used it and their perception of how a potential grievance would be handled.

Some women officers interviewed by telephone told us that they would be wary of raising a grievance because of the perceived consequences:

- “It [a potential grievance] wouldn’t go anywhere and would be career suicide.”
- “It’s pointless [to raise a grievance] as XX is all powerful. What would happen if I took it over their head? There would be no support.”

This belief that taking a grievance would be pointless, or not handled well, is influenced by what women officers understand has happened to colleagues in other regions, or in the past, when they took out a grievance. Officers told us that they are aware that women in regions other than their own have submitted grievances but that the outcome was not favourable, often resulting in the officer concerned leaving Unite (or its predecessor unions) with a settlement agreement:

- “The outcome for the woman officer wasn’t favourable and basically she was told to ‘shut up and put up’ by the top of the tree, which made me think ‘OK, I’ll just get on with things’.”
- “I am aware of at least three cases, but not in my region. Of these three, the situation was so bad that two were offered settlement agreements and no longer work for Unite. All three cases involved sex discrimination.”
- “The treatment by our union was atrocious. No consistency. Some women have had a difficult time.”
- “There is a perception that if you ‘cause a fuss’ you will be given money to go away.”

“The union is not very good at dealing with officers’ issues in an informal way, leaving us no choice but to take out a grievance....It shouldn’t take a grievance to sort out.” (telephone interview)

The telephone interviews explored officers’ views on the effectiveness of the union in implementing its grievance policy

- “The policy is good and we were consulted on it.”
- “No consistency in treatment.”
- “I think the implementation is mixed; not sure how good the union is in supporting their own workforce, although we support members in other workplaces.”
- “Tick box exercise.”
- “Not aware that the policy has been used successfully by anyone; grievances quickly become political.”
- “The introduction of the RCO role is taking the heat out of situations.”

## **7 Organisational culture**

The report has highlighted a wide range of issues that affect women officers and has also pointed to the diversity of opinion within the union.

In this last section we consider, first, how supportive to women officers the organisational culture is perceived to be, and second, how, and in what ways, the working environment is judged to have changed over the past five years.

### **A) Support in the workplace**

The survey asked respondents to indicate how far they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements (see table below). The aim was to explore whether they felt supported at work, and whom they felt they could turn to if they had concerns at work.

The majority of women officers tend to agree that Unite colleagues and the ONC rep are supportive and interested in what they do.

However, a sizeable group (37.1%) agree, or strongly agree, that talking about their concerns is viewed by both colleagues and the organisation as a “weakness.” Nearly one third (31.5%) agree, or strongly agree, that “colleagues have their own concerns and don’t want to listen to mine.”

[report continues on following page]

Table E: support at work						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response	Total
I have at least one UNITE colleague who is supportive and interested in what I do at work	58.6% 41	30.0% 21	2.9% 2	7.1% 5	1.4% 1	70
Colleagues have their own concerns and don't want to listen to mine	8.6% 6	22.9% 16	32.9% 23	31.4% 22	4.3% 3	70
My ONC rep is easily accessible and I feel I can speak to them about any concerns	32.9% 23	38.8% 27	8.6% 6	8.6% 6	11.4% 8	70
Talking about work concerns to either managers or ONC reps is viewed by colleagues and the organisation as a weakness	20.0% 14	17.1% 12	32.9% 23	20.0% 14	10.0% 7	70
I work as part of a supportive team	22.1% 15	35.3% 24	20.6% 14	13.2% 9	8.8% 6	68

## B) Changes in the past five years

Finally, the survey asked respondents whether the working environment at Unite has got better, worse or stayed the same over the past five years (or since they started work if they have less than five years' service). The largest group of officers (42.4% of the total) believe it has stayed the same; 22.7% that it has got "much" or "slightly" worse; and 24.2% that it has improved "slightly" or "greatly."

Respondents were asked to describe how it has changed and 22 officers contributed their comments. These comments were divided equally between positive and negative

statements. Comments on the current working environment, both positive and negative, can be grouped as follows:

#### *Women officer numbers/profile in the union*

Comments on the steady growth in numbers of women officers were generally viewed favourably:

- “More women are involved.”
- “Since becoming Unite we have more women in the office and more women activists, which is a positive thing.”
- “We have employed more women officers and some of the problematic reps have stood down.”
- “There are now more women officers so hope that it [working environment] will improve.”

However:

- “Still not enough female officers and complaints never ever taken seriously even with HR involvement.”
- “The role of women as officers seems to have been downgraded and often regarded as poor.”
- “The environment has become more male dominated. I previously worked with a mix of male and female colleagues, but am now the only woman.”

#### *Workload/allocation*

Workload issues were only mentioned by a few officers but their comments were critical:

- “Bad work allocation.”
- “Isolation is a problem and [I’m] given difficult workload”
- “Workload: the expectation is that working longer and more unsociable hours is just part of the job and we need to ‘just get on with it’. General pressure around 100% campaigns, lack of respect from some parts of the membership/lay officials.”
- “There is less support and more pressure on everyone. This leads to hostility and people feeling threatened and therefore they treat you badly.”

#### *Management support*

Comments about management were divided between those who felt their manager is supportive and those who did not:

- “The level of support is not consistent from senior levels of management.”
- “I believe that, as a female officer of Unite, I am treated as a necessary evil so management can demonstrate to the wider world how good they are with equalities. There is no point in raising grievances, as you know they will never be upheld. The managers in the organisation are predominantly men, some of which I consider to be real bullies and these are the men that would carry out any investigation. If you dare to take out a grievance against management you know that



your career is over and your life will be made hell. This behaviour has got steadily worse over the past five years.”

- “Less support, more pressure on everyone. This leads to hostility and people feeling threatened, therefore, they treat you badly.”
- “A woman should never be bullied out of a job or region by the lack of action of those with the power to change the fact that some individuals have a real problem with women in our union.”
- “Our current regional secretary is very supportive towards women officers.”
- “The RCO management role has assisted with the relationship between me and the regional secretary.”
- “It has always been supportive. Occasionally the odd senior officer hasn’t been very helpful, but that was the experience of my male colleagues also.”
- “My RCO and regional secretary have been supportive and I feel I have integrated well into the region with far less pressure compared to the role I was previously undertaking.”

### *Workplace culture*

Some comments were concerned with the persistence of what officers perceived to be a workplace culture which does not promote the equal status of men and women:

- “I am disappointed with the organisation’s commitment to inclusivity and diversity. From an organisational point of view, there seems to be no initiative to address the problems women face at a more senior level in the region or any commitment to create a culture where women feel they have genuine career opportunities ahead of them in the organisation. The ‘old boys’ network is alive and kicking unfortunately in Unite where it is who you know and where they come from that matters. There is also a very bad tendency to treat women officers as if they need to be advised how to do their job and their skills are not considered when it comes to, for example, a tough industrial dispute. Whilst women officers will talk to each other more about difficult work situations, their expertise is bypassed when it comes to trying to resolve difficult disputes. It is always a male who is referred to for advice.”
- “In previous unions there was a clear women’s network and a respectful acknowledgement of this from male colleagues, and an ability to influence the union’s position on equality matters both for us as workers and as a union generally. Now the role of women as officers seems to have been downgraded and often regarded as poor.”

## 8 Priorities for action and the role of the ONC

In this section we review findings from the telephone interviews on priorities for action, the role of the ONC, and responsibility for initiating change.

### A) Officers' views on ONC priorities

The telephone interviews asked participants for their views on what the union should do in the next 12-18 months to improve the working environment for women officers. The main areas that were mentioned were: health, wellbeing and personal safety; policies to address family responsibilities and promote work-life balance; improvement in people management skills; and changes in the organisational culture with a particular focus on initiatives to increase the recruitment of women officers.

Interviewees were then asked which of the issues mentioned was the most urgent priority. Some interviewees identified stress, isolation and safety issues as a top priority. Several others highlighted support for people with family responsibilities and related this to managing workload pressures and stress.

Some extracts from the responses are given below.

#### *Health, wellbeing and personal safety*

- “A counselling line should be made available and it should be common knowledge instead of having to find out about it. Mental health issues need to be normalised.”
- “The organisation needs to deal with stress, bullying and harassment. While training has started, it is not enough. It is not just about training. It is about the organisation that introduces a process that helps us to deal with it. It is about what you are doing as an employer.”
- “There is no lone working guidance or provision of personal alarms and there does not seem to be any acknowledgement by the union of the risks or attempt to mitigate them.”
- “We need some training and guidance on safe working practices, particularly covering the times when we’re working unsocial hours at workplaces that are not within the union’s control.”
- “We have an ageing workforce. We need to look after people doing an incredibly stressful job.”

#### *Family responsibilities*

- “The union needs to look after people doing an incredibly stressful job; we need to bring in new young, vibrant life and not burn them out. How do we manage people in their mid-lives with families?”
- “If you have family and eldercare responsibilities, it is not acceptable to take home two hours work. The union needs to look at the work pressures on people and recognise that the same pressures affect some people harder. I’m not aware of any family policies, but I think the union would be petrified to put any in place because of the number of officers who currently work evenings and weekends.”

- “I’m not aware of any family leave/carer’s leave policy though I think there might be something discretionary.”
- “The union is not very supportive if you have children in terms of the hours. Things come up at the last minute. It is not a job where it is easy to plan a week ahead and that is difficult for people with children. It is not supportive compared with some of the workplaces I go into.”

### *People management*

- “There is little people management in Unite. The RCOs are not real managers and some of the people management procedures are weak, for example, implementation of the sickness absence policy is variable at best. We need a better management structure and, in particular, better people management. I can identify a couple of issues where I need training support, but nobody is exploring this with me.”

### *Changes in the organisational culture*

- “Recruit more women officers and achieve a better representation for women higher up in the organisation. Our structures do not support this, for example, it is difficult for women reps and activists to get onto the relevant committees or into other positions where officer recruits typically come from. On top of this, the few women activists that do exist receive little support to develop them into roles higher up the union structure.”
- “The focus should be on recruiting more women officers; the way the job is designed makes it difficult for women to come through as we tend to recruit from our reps/shop stewards network and it is difficult for women to get on this first rung of the ladder. There are very few women reps in the workplaces I deal with.”
- “There needs to be more acknowledgement of the skill set of women, for example, we’re not so antagonistic/adversarial, and challenging of the macho image. Men also need to acknowledge that their approach doesn’t always work.”
- “We all need to do some navel gazing, including me. Do I use the right language all the time? No, but the language we use is important and we need to lead by example and challenge inappropriate language.”
- “We need team building sessions for all officers and across regions so that those away from the ‘action’ do not feel isolated. Peer pressure is powerful; we need to see how we all work.”
- “People need to get used to seeing women everywhere in the union and in our unionised workplaces.”
- “I don’t know what the union should do in the near future. Nothing will happen. The management wouldn’t even pay for this study and so the officers have paid.”

### *Women officers’ network*

The survey asked respondents whether they thought there should be a women officers’ network in Unite. There was broad support for the idea of a women officers’ network (supported by 64.9% of all officers). However, almost 30% (28.4%) have no strong feelings either way.

The telephone interviews explored attitudes towards setting up a network. The majority of interviewees generally supported the idea of some kind of forum for women officers, believing this could provide an opportunity to swap ideas and share experiences, helping to reduce feelings of isolation.

Several were unsure, however, that a separate women's network was desirable. One stated that she "tends to bounce ideas off everyone equally, not just my female colleagues"; a second does not support the idea of a network "because there should be discussions across male and female officers."

Another questioned that a network could achieve anything unless and until senior management recognises there is an issue with the low number of women officers. A third would like some kind of forum, "providing there is confidentiality", but does not believe this could be assured. One supports a network only if its purpose is to share knowledge and skills, not if it is simply a "whine-fest."

"If the idea is to genuinely support women, a network would be fantastic, but I worry it might become a professional thing, in which case some women might use it simply to 'get on'. In my experience, women are quite prepared to walk all over other women to get ahead and to 'prove' themselves." (telephone interview)

### *ONC and HR role*

The women we spoke to in the telephone interviews broadly agree that the ONC is doing a good job representing them. However, a number said they feel it should do more, but recognised that this needs to be a collective push and that a women's network should help distil negotiating priorities.

One adds that she feels the Committee "could be faster and more effective" in dealing with issues such as support around stress." Two officers questioned the diversity of the ONC and in particular its absence of young and BAEM women. Another said that she does not believe the ONC takes the particular needs of women officers into consideration: "This might be because they want to treat men and women equally, or it might be because they do not understand the real issues we face."

Women officers believe that responsibility for introducing changes in the areas covered by this research should lie with the union's human resources department and the ONC, but with significant buy-in from the senior management of the union: "It must be top-down to be effective – i.e. the HR department and senior level management. You have to lead from the top-down because you are setting an example." Another said action on equality should be driven by the executive council: "They should be driving the bottom-up practical steps that are needed in order for women activists to get on the first rung on the ladder to becoming an officer." One believed that the initiative should come from the union's chief of staff in the form of "an instruction."

A couple of officers in the telephone interviews mentioned that, as a lay member-led organisation, the organisation should be familiar with bottom-up ways of working: “We can manage ourselves to a great extent.” One officer did not believe regional secretaries should, or could, take the lead: “The regional secretaries often see their regions like feudal states so it’s no good expecting them to take the lead in some of these areas.”

One officer suggested working groups of women officers should be established to explore changes: “We can draw on the good practices operating in some of the workplaces in which we operate. I doubt this would happen though as management doesn’t want to know.”

## 9 Recommendations

Based on the comments offered by women in their responses to the online survey, together with information gathered during the telephone interview, this report recommends the following potential actions for the union's negotiating bodies:

### Education and training/raising awareness

- There is a considerable gap in officers' knowledge or understanding of the employer's policies in some areas. For example, there was confusion about whether there is any policy on lone working, the right to request special leave and the policy regarding the employment of part-time officers. The ONC might press the union to carry out an awareness raising programme and for policies to be covered in an officer's induction.
- Many officers told us that they are unaware/not clear about the existence of certain employer-provided benefits, including access to occupational health and counselling. The ONC might press the union to carry out an awareness-raising initiative.
- The work-related training needs of women officers should be evaluated by HR: officers raised a number of potential areas where they feel training would be beneficial, for example, unconscious bias training, mental health first aid and managing potentially hostile/violent situations at work.

### Line manager support

- There does not appear to be a comprehensive officer induction process in place. This issue needs addressing, perhaps exploring the introduction of mentors for new women officers.
- Clarification of reporting structures: some officers are unclear as to the identity of their "real" first line manager. Others are aware of who their manager is supposed to be but sometimes "choose" a different individual to perform the function.
- Clarification/discussions on the process for determining or changing an officer's work allocation: some women officers feel it currently lacks transparency and operates at the whim of the regional secretary.

### HR policies/practices

- Equality audits/impact assessments should be carried out when changes are made to employment-related policies and practices: this will help counter women officers' criticism that the union never examines the impact and implications of its decisions and policies for equal treatment/fairness. There needs to be buy-in from the senior management team to this part of the people management agenda; women officers express concern that the senior management team is not committed to the inclusivity and diversity agenda.
- The organisation needs comprehensive guidance on keeping safe when working alone (covering home visits, off-site visits, car use, telephone safety, working after dark and union provision of personal protective equipment and personal alarms).

- The union needs to look at introducing best practice policies to support employees with family responsibilities as this emerges as an issue of key concern to women officers and will also be relevant to male officers with family responsibilities.
- In view of the significant number of women officers taking out grievances, the union should review how it deals informally with officers' work concerns before they become formal grievances. It should also review how consistently the grievance process is being implemented across regions.

### **Unite-specific actions**

- Explore establishing a Unite-wide women officers' network, but also less formal ways of encouraging women in neighbouring regions/offices to collaborate/network.
- Conduct a survey of recruitment/retention issues: what are the factors that lead women officers to leave the union, and what are the factors that encourage them to stay? The survey should compare male and female retention rates and reasons for any differences.

## Appendix 1

### Women officer survey: survey questionnaire

This survey is part of a research project being carried out by independent researchers into the working experiences of women officers in Unite.

Please answer as many questions as you can – the more detailed picture we can build, the more effective the ONC can be in negotiating on your behalf. Please consider sending one of us an email (details at end of survey) indicating your willingness to be contacted by one of the independent researchers for a more detailed discussion. All responses are confidential and no individuals will be identified.

What happens to the information you provide?

Your responses will be completely confidential and only used by the independent researchers for the purposes of this research. All responses are anonymous and no one who takes part in the research will be identified.

The results will be used to inform the ONC's discussions with the management on improving the lives of women working for Unite in areas such as dignity at work, health and wellbeing and bullying and harassment.

The survey should take about 15 minutes and does not involve any special preparation.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BY 12 NOON FEBRUARY 24 2016

Thank you.

Jennifer Hurstfield and Sarah Silcox, independent researchers working on behalf of the ONC.

#### 1. Your Age

- 18 - 24 years of age
- 25 - 34 years of age
- 35 - 44 years of age
- 45 - 54 years of age
- 55- 64 years of age
- 65 and over years of age

#### 2. Do you have caring responsibilities?



- Dependent child/children under school age
- Other dependent child/children
- Dependent parent/parents
- Dependent partner
- Other dependent adult
- I have no caring responsibilities

**3. Do you have an agreement to work flexible hours?**

- Yes
- No

Please provide details

**4. How long have you been a Union Officer?**

- Under 2 years
- 2 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- More than 15 years

**5. How would you describe your role?**

- My work is mainly sectoral based
- My work is mainly geographical based
- My work is split as I cover both sector and particular locations
- I am a national officer

I am an officer with particular responsibilities such as equalities, legal, political or educational remit

**6. Do you think there should be a women Officers' network in UNITE?**

- Yes
- No
- Have no strong feelings either way

**7. Please indicate below how far you agree with the following statements**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
My work allocation is fair in that there is a mix of recognised and unrecognised workplaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work allocation is fair in that there is a balance of organised groups and individual members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work allocation is fair in that it reasonably represents both male and female members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel supported at work by my immediate line manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel able to discuss and be listened to about workload allocation issues by my immediate line manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please add any other comments you wish about your allocation

**8. Does your role usually entail you working**

- Alone
- With one other Officer or member of staff
- With more than one other Officer or member of staff

**9. If you work with other Officers how often are you the only woman at meetings/events?**

- Occasionally
- Most of the time
- All of the time
- No response

**10. Do you use a car for work-related travel (excluding commuting)?**

- Occasionally
- Most of the time
- All of the time
- Do not travel for work
- No response

**11. How many miles did you drive in the course of your UNITE work last month?**

- Under 100 miles
- 101-500 miles
- 501-1000 miles
- over 1000 miles
- Please estimate your annual work-related mileage for 2015

**12. How many hours did you spend driving as part of your job for UNITE last month (excluding commuting)?**

- Fewer than 20 hours
- 21-40 hours
- 41-80 hours
- More than 80 hours

**13. How often are you away from home for at least one night as part of your UNITE job?**

- Never
- Less than six times a year
- Between one and five times a month
- More than five times a month
- No response

**14. When you are working away from home overnight as part of your work are you with other UNITE Officers or staff?**

- Hardly ever
- Most of the time
- All of the time
- Not required to work away from home
- No response

**15. How often do you perform work duties during unsocial hours at**

		One to	
	Less than	three	Four or
	six times	times per	more times
	per	month on	per month on
Never	annum	average	average

	Never	Less than six times per annum	One to three times per month on average	Four or more times per month on average
Weekends?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Early mornings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Late evenings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. Do you believe the requirement for you to work unsocial hours affects your home/personal life?**

- Significantly
- Slightly
- Hardly at all
- Not at all
- No response

**17. Please describe the balance you are able to achieve between working for UNITE and your home/personal life**

- I am not able to achieve any sort of balance between work and home life much of the time
- I often struggle to balance work and home life
- I am usually able to achieve a reasonable balance
- I achieve a good balance between work and home life
- No response

**18. If you do struggle to balance work and home life have you raised it with your employer?**

- Yes
- No

**19. How good is UNITE as an employer at supporting you to maintain a balance between work and family/dependency issues?**

- Very good
- Quite good
- Not at all good
- No response

**20. Please indicate your awareness of the following UNITE policies. Tick all that apply.**

	Aware of Policy	Have Read Policy
Equal Opportunity Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grievance Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disciplinary Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Absence Management Policy & Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**21. Your employer is committed to maintaining a working environment that is safe, without risks to health and provides adequate facilities and arrangements. To what extent do you believe this currently extends to the management of work-related risks to your mental health?**

- A great deal
- Slightly

- Not at all
- No response

**22. In the past five years (or since starting your current employment if you have less than five years' service) have you received any specific guidance from management on working safely off-site, at home ,on your own or whilst travelling to and from work?**

- Yes
- No

**23. Have you received stress awareness training in the last two years?**

- Yes
- No

**24. In the past five years (or since starting your current employment if you have less than five years' service) have you ever raised an issue relating to your welfare at work (including bullying, harassment or work-related stress)?**

- Yes
- No

**25. If yes how was this handled?**

- Very well
- Reasonably well
- Not at all well
- No response

**26. In the past 18 months have you taken time off work sick that you attribute to poor working conditions; for example, stress-related absence?**

- Yes
- No

**27. In the past five years (or since starting your current employment where you have less than five years' service) have you accessed the union's occupational health services for a work-related mental health issue?**

- Yes
- No

**28. If yes, please rate the quality of service you received**

- Did not help improve my situation
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal
- No response

**29. In the past five years (or less where your service with UNITE is under five years) have you accessed the union's counselling service?**

- Yes
- No
- Not aware such a service

**30. If yes, please rate the quality of service you received**

- Did not help improve my situation
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal
- No response

**31. To what extent do you feel isolated in the workplace due to the fact that you are a woman?**

- Very isolated
- Slightly isolated



- Not isolated
- No response

Please give an example of the type of work situation in which you feel isolated

**32. In the past five years (or since starting your current employment if you have less than five years' service) have you ever raised a work issue with your manager that you believe arose due to the fact that you are a woman?**

- Yes
- No

**33. Please respond to the following statements**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No response
I have at least one UNITE colleague who is supportive and interested in what I do at work	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Colleagues have their own concerns and don't want to listen to mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
My ONC rep is easily accessible and I feel I can speak to them about any concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talking about work concerns to either managers or ONC reps is viewed by colleagues and the organisation as a weakness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work as part of a	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Strongly  
Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly  
Disagree      No  
response

supportive team

**34. Has a complaint (either formal or informal) ever been made about your performance at work by a member/lay rep or member's employer**

- Yes
- No

**35. If Yes, was the complaint made by**

- A member
- Lay rep/activist
- Member's employer

**36. If Yes, do you believe or suspect that any of these complaints were in part or wholly made because you are a woman?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- No response

**37. In the course of your work as an Officer for UNITE, have you ever experienced a hostile environment because you are a woman?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- No response

**38. If you entered Yes, how often has this happened to you?**

- Once
- A few times
- Frequently
- No response

**39. If you have ever experienced a hostile working environment when working for UNITE due to you being a woman, what form did the hostility take? Tick all that apply.**

- verbal abuse of a non-sexual nature
- verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- aggressive stance
- I was made to feel uncomfortable
- I felt threatened
- Other form of hostile behaviour please give examples

**40. Who do you feel was primarily responsible for generating the hostile environment? Tick as many that apply.**

- Member(s)
- Lay Rep(s)
- Other UNITE colleagues
- Manager(s) within the union
- Manager(s) within member's workplace
- Other (please specify)

**41. Have you ever felt frightened whilst working as an Officer because of a real incident or threat of harassment?**

- Yes
- No

**42. If yes, have you felt frightened**

- Once or twice
- A few times
- Frequently
- No response

**43. How comfortable do you feel giving your telephone number to a member or rep?**

- Not at all comfortable
- Quite comfortable
- Completely comfortable
- No response

**44. Have you ever had a problem as a result of giving your telephone number to a member or rep as part of your job?**

- Yes
- No

**45. If yes, please describe the most recent experience. Tick all that apply**

- Unwelcome calls that were not work-related
- Calls at inconvenient times despite informing caller of your availability
- Calls where the caller's number is withheld
- Offensive or upsetting calls

Other problems (please specify)

**46. If you have received problem telephone calls from members/lay reps, did you complain or seek support from your manager(s)?**

Yes

No

**47. If yes, how supportive was the management response (please answer in relation to the most recent incident if you have been affected more than once)**

Very supportive

Slightly supportive

Not at all supportive

Manager did not respond

No response

**48. In the past five years (or since you have started working for UNITE if you have less than five years' service) have you submitted a grievance under the union's grievance policy?**

Yes

No

**49. If yes, was this grievance related to an issue that you would describe as bullying or harassment?**

Yes

No

**50. If yes, was the outcome of the grievance procedure:**

Very satisfactory

- Partially satisfactory
- Not satisfactory
- Unresolved

**51. Over the past five years (or since you have started working for UNITE if you have less than five years' service) has the working environment for you as a woman Officer in UNITE:**

- Got much worse
- Got slightly worse
- Stayed the same
- Improved slightly
- Improved greatly
- No response

Please describe how it has changed.

## Appendix 2

### ONC telephone interviews: schedule

#### Background questions

Use this to confirm details, [some of which are in the spreadsheet] and expand on info. Ask:

Current role, length of time, sector, region, hours of work

How would you describe your ethnic status?

Any previous role in union

Previous work experience before coming to Unite

Ethnicity?

Please could you describe your current work role in terms of:

Your responsibilities

Who you work with - e.g. gender profile/ whether mainly alone/with other officers/lay members etc.

How often do you work unsocial hours/work away from home?

Line management structure

#### Work experience

How would you describe your day-to-day working environment as a woman officer? We are interested in both positive and negative aspects.

Have you raised any specific concerns as a woman about your working environment in the past (up to 5 years ago)? [If yes, probe on the details and what was done about it, and how satisfactory the outcome was for her.]

Do you currently have any specific concerns about your working environment? If yes, have you raised this concern with anyone/what action has been/is being taken etc.

If you do have specific concerns, but haven't raised them with a manager/union rep, why not?

**Specific issues** (*this will overlap with previous section, but want to ask generally first and see what comes up and in this section probe specific ones*)

Have you ever felt (in the past 5 years) that you are being bullied or harassed at work? If so, please describe the circumstances/what you did about it/ did you raise your concern with anyone – line manager, Unite colleagues etc/any outcome. *Clarify when this happened.*

Have you ever felt you have been discriminated against/treated unfairly because you are a woman? Please describe the circumstances/ your actions/ did you raise your concern with anyone – line manager, Unite colleagues etc/and the outcome. *Clarify when this happened.*

Have you ever been concerned about your own safety at work – e.g. when working alone? Please describe the circumstances, your actions/ did you raise your concern with anyone – line manager, Unite colleagues etc/ and outcome. *Clarify when this happened.*

Have you ever suffered from stress or any other mental health problems that you attribute to work? Please describe the nature of the mental health issues you experienced and what you see as the main cause. Did you raise your concern about how work is affecting your health with anyone – line manager, Unite colleagues, union health services etc? Was any action taken? What was the outcome? *Clarify when this happened*

In general how effective do you think Unite is in dealing with women officers' concerns such as:

Bullying/harassment

Isolation

Safety at work

Stress at work

Have you ever taken out a grievance under the union's grievance procedures? Please describe what this was about and the outcome.

Are you aware of other women officers at Unite who have complained/taken out a grievance about their treatment/working environment? [Probe for details]

What are your views on how effective the union is in implementing its formal policies:

Grievance/disciplinary

Equal Opportunities

Sickness Absence

Were you aware that there is a Dignity at Work policy in draft form only and that this deals with bullying and harassment?

If you do have any concern about your treatment at work, who would you be most likely to go to first for support and why?

How would you describe the current working culture at Unite?

What does the union do best in terms of how it supports women officers?



### **Action/recommendations**

What do you think the union should do in the next 12-18 months to improve the working environment for women officers?

Of the issues you have mentioned which is the most urgent priority and why?

Who should take the lead now in introducing any changes?

Would you find some kind of women officers' network/forum in Unite useful? [Explore reasons]

The role of the ONC is to represent all Unite officers and to negotiate improvements in their terms and conditions, including the working environment. How well do you believe it supports women officers in particular? How could the ONC improve how it supports you at work?

## ONC Decisions to be made

1. Endorse the report and issue thanks to all the Women Officers for their participation.
2. Issue the full report to all Women Officers
3. Issue the report to the Senior Management Team
4. Promote at constituency level establishment of women officer networks
5. Submit list of matters to discuss with management

### A. Joint Issues

Policy Awareness generally but specifically counselling and OH  
Negotiate H&S Policy to include Lone Working guidance, Mental Health/Stress  
Policy, Managing potentially hostile/violent situations at work.  
Unconscious Bias training for all Officers and Managers  
Induction Policy  
ONC to inform all Officers of Line Manager structure  
Officer allocation issues  
Equality audits/impact assessments re policies and practices  
Policies for employees with family responsibilities  
Review Grievance Policy to beef up informal stages

6. Produce report update at national conference January 2017
7. Seek facility for Women Officers Conference the day before main Conference
8. Produce historic update on Women Officers who have left the unions' employment since 2008.