

Work-life balance – an equality issue

Childcare, shift work, long hours, an ‘always-on’ culture – all these affect our work-life balance, and they affect different groups in specific ways. The good news is, there’s plenty that trade unions can do to improve things.

Check out some of our guides and resources if you want to know more:

Flexible working

Flexible working can help people balance caring responsibilities and work – or could be a reasonable adjustment for disabled workers. There are many types of flexible working such as working different hours, home and hybrid working, but it’s important that these are fairly negotiated.

- [Flexible working: making it work](#): a toolkit produced by UNISON with Working Families
- [Working from home and hybrid working](#): bargaining guide
- [Bargaining on working hours](#): bargaining guide

Childcare and other caring responsibilities

Childcare and caring responsibilities still often fall on women, but there are a range of policies which employers can use to support working parents and others with caring responsibilities.

- [Negotiating for working parents guide including a model policy](#) (maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave, parental leave)
- [Carer’s policies](#): a bargaining guide and model policy

Pay gaps

Equality pay gaps are the difference in the average pay of a group of people who face discrimination due to a ‘protected characteristic,’ such as women, disabled people or Black workers, compared to the average pay for workers who do not face such discrimination.

- [Pay gaps bargaining guide](#)
- Gender - [Bridge the gender pay gap](#): bargaining guide
- Ethnicity – [Negotiating for race equality: ethnicity pay gap](#): checklist and toolkit

Insecure work and precarity

Precarious work such as zero-hours contracts or rolling short-term contracts can stop you being able to plan for the future. Or if you can’t rely on regular hours, you might end up having to take on more than one job.

Women, especially Black women, and young people are much more likely to be on zero-hours contracts.

- [Negotiating for race equality: insecure work](#): checklist and toolkit
- [Negotiating for more secure work](#): bargaining guide

Menopause

8 out of 10 menopausal women are in work. The menopause can affect memory and ability to concentrate, can cause anxiety and low mood, as well as physical symptoms such as fatigue and hot flushes. Menopause can affect women, non-binary people and trans men for up to ten years, and 45% of people experiencing the menopause say it affects their work.

- [Menopause guidance and model policy](#) and [leaflet](#)

Mental health

Mental health problems can both affect, and be caused by, or made worse by your work – and long hours, poor management, workload and discrimination all have an impact on mental health. Women, Black workers, LGBT+ workers and young people are more likely to experience mental health problems related to work.

- [Women's mental health issues – not to be ignored at work](#): guide for UNISON reps
- Young Members Mental Health Matters campaign resources: [leaflet](#), [postcards](#) and [leaflet on the Right to disconnect](#)
- [Model Mental Health Policy](#) that can be used as a basis for negotiations in regions and branches.
- [Bargaining on Mental Health policies: A practical guide for UNISON branches](#): bargaining guide
- [Work-related stress](#): a toolkit

Reasonable adjustments and disability leave

Reasonable adjustments are changes that employers make to address the barriers disabled people face in the workplace. Disability leave is paid or unpaid time off for reasons related to someone's disability: it is one kind of reasonable adjustment which disabled workers may be entitled to under the Equality Act 2010.

- [Reasonable Adjustments](#): bargaining guide, model policy and accessibility passport
- [Disability Leave](#): bargaining guide and model policy
- [Quick Guide – Reasonable Adjustments](#)
- [Proving disability and reasonable adjustments](#): a guide for UNISON reps by Tamara Lewis

Trans workers' rights

Workplaces with strong trans equality policies should include paid time off for transition-related appointments and treatment. UNISON have a model trans equality policy which your workplace can adopt.

- [Transgender workers' rights](#): a factsheet
- [Model trans equality policy](#) that can be used as a basis for negotiations in regions and branches