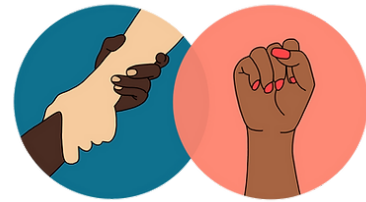




**Union
Workers'
Union**



Sisters to the Front

Eliminating Sexual Violence in the UK Trade Union Movement UK Standards (and accompanying toolkit)

Last updated: 07 March 2025

Background

The Union Workers Union (UWU) is an independent trade union for those who work in the movement. In 2024, we merged with **Sisters to the Front** (S2F), which is a professional network for women workers of trade unions. A group of activist members convened to co-produce these Standards over a period of months based on our lived experiences and current research. The standards are for consideration by UWU in the first instance and then compliance by the wider UK Trade Union movement.

Definition - What do we mean by sexual violence?

Sexual violence is an abuse of power. We use the term sexual violence to encapsulate all forms of abuse, this includes any unwelcome or unwanted words or actions. As well as sexual harassment, assault, and rape, sexual violence includes manipulation, gaslighting, coercion, threats, ostracisation, sexist language and verbal abuse.¹

Sexual violence is prevalent across the workers' movement. These standards and accompanying toolkit have been designed to assist those courageous trade union colleagues and members seeking to address this problem. We see the standards as a tool of empowerment.

Our Approach

We are intersectional in all that we do, working collectively to create a supportive, liberated, and decolonising space. We openly and respectfully challenge ourselves and each other and our collective is based on mutuality, trust, and reciprocity. We will

¹ There is a broad literature on this. For example 'Sexual violence can be defined as: 'a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and which cannot be easily distinguished, [it is a] range of abuse, intimidation, coercion, intrusion, threat and force'. We acknowledge 'that there are no clearly defined and discrete analytic categories into which [perpetrators'] behaviour can be placed' (Kelly, 1988 p. 76).

challenge and meaningfully change existing power structures and bridge the divide between staff and members, for the mutual empowerment of all.

Our Expectations of UK Trade Unions

- To live the values of the trade union movement in their own employment relations. These include commitments to the principles of empowerment, liberation, anti-oppression, solidarity, trust, justice, equity, and inclusion.
- We take a whole trade union approach to eliminating sexual violence. All workers and members at every level of power in the trade union movement will be held accountable when they breach these values.
- We recognise that union leaders have particular accountability in changing and setting the culture of the union movement.

The following Standards will be adopted and enacted across the trade union movement as part of a joint commitment to eradicating sexual violence.

THE STANDARDS

1. Prevention

Every trade union and every trade unionist has a responsibility to make sure that every workplace has a culture that is against sexual violence, discrimination, and abuse of every kind.

This includes:

- **Legislation** - including new prevention measures, and the Union's fundamental duty of care under health and safety legislation. This must be the moral and ethical starting point for the elimination of sexual violence.
- Ensuring all **policies** - from recruitment through to health and safety, disciplinary and grievance - are trauma-informed, and centre the commitment to eliminating the culture of sexual violence, discrimination, and abuse.
- Mandatory and liberatory **education** – for all union staff and members/ reps which draws on lived experiences. This will include specific training for union leaders.
- **Organising** - building a network of specifically trained reps and allies across the organisation and trade union movement.

2. Accountability

Every trade union and every trade unionist has a responsibility to be accountable for the elimination of sexual violence at all levels across the movement and transparent in the ways that they do it.

This includes:

- High standards of **governance with integrity** and the empowerment of elected officers, that demand accountability of Unions that do not abide by their own policies.
- Full **transparency** on reporting, measures taken, and the outcomes of any processes including grievances, capability, disciplinary or other related policies.
- No **Non-Disclosure Agreements** or silencing mechanisms and transparent reporting of previous ones.
- **Independent** and specifically trained investigators, chairs and hearing panels on the procedures attached to relevant employment policies.

3. Support

Every trade union and trade unionist has a responsibility to create and safeguard and (the right to) be an active part of a (safe and) supportive working environment.

This includes:

- Be an **active ally** and take personal responsibility for contributing to a safe and supportive environment
- Have safe **reporting mechanisms**, with no detriment for victims/ survivors.
- **Value the lived experience** of victims and survivors in all aspects of policies, procedures and training.
- **Ongoing support** - both formal and informal - available and fully accessible for all victims and survivors, and not time-limited.

Future resources will include a Toolkit to accompany the Standards. Together these will provide powerful and practical tools to end sexual violence across the trade union movement.