

## FOUR WAYS TO SPEAK OUT

OVER the last ten years incidents of domestic violence have fallen by 64% but tragically the statistics speak for themselves and women are still being killed by abusive partners. During the period 2007/8, 106 people lost their lives to current or previous partners - 72 of them were women.

On 25th November 2009, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, domestic violence charity Refuge and cosmetics company Avon launched the 'Four ways to speak out' campaign.

The campaign urges people to 'speak out' against domestic violence in four simple ways:

- Speak to the Government by signing their petition to put an end to the postcode lottery of domestic violence services. Currently 1 in 3 local authorities do not provide any domestic violence services in their locality.
- Speak out to save lives by buying an Avon empowerment necklace to commemorate the women killed and to fund vital services.
- Speak to the local community by downloading a poster to display so women know where to get help.
- Speak to family and friends invite them to join the campaign.

You can find out more about the campaign by visiting [www.fourwaystospeakout.com](http://www.fourwaystospeakout.com)



## NEW GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

'TOGETHER we can end violence against women and girls' is the government strategy launched on 25th November, which aims to bring an end to violence against women and girls in the UK.

It is hoped that the strategy will be in force by 2011 and comprises of 3 key areas: protection, provision and prevention. They plan to introduce:

- Over £13m worth of funding to help support victims of sexual and domestic violence.
- Increased investment in family intervention projects to support 10,000 families a year.
- Development of a dedicated stalking and harassment helpline.
- Funding for a new 24 hour sexual violence hotline and an online directory of services
- The piloting of domestic violence protection orders ('Go' orders) to exclude perpetrators from their homes.

The most controversial aspect of the new strategy is the introduction of compulsory lessons in gender equality and preventing violence in relationships to children from the age of 5 in schools.

Home Secretary Alan Johnson said: 'Violence against women and girls ruins lives breaks up families and has a lasting impact across the generations.'

'Changing attitudes that tolerate violence against women and girls will take time but is essential if we are to eradicate this blight on women's lives.'



**International Womens Day  
Drinks Reception**  
hosted by ASLEF's Women's  
Representative Committee



Buffet and  
Entertainment

Welcome drink

Charity Raffle

**Monday 8th March  
2010**  
from 5pm to 9pm  
held in The Ballroom  
Arlowright Road  
Hamstead

For tickets contact Head Office: 020 7317 8600  
\*You will need to bring your own alcohol due  
to licensing restrictions

# Sisters on the move

**T**HE word menopause conjures up lots of different images, not least the one I had as a teenager. I imagined that when the menopause loomed, a mild mannered woman would go to bed one night, then awaken as something akin to Norman Bates in the 'Psycho' shower scene!

The menopause doesn't happen overnight, in fact it is only 1 year after a woman's menstrual cycle has ceased that menopause occurs. There are 3 stages;

**Peri Menopause** – This can occur anywhere between 2 and 8 years before a woman's last period. During this time some women may experience heavy bleeding (flooding) when menstruating, increased PMS, irregular periods, reduced libido, hot flushes and night sweats.

**Menopause** – This is when ovulation stops, some women may notice vaginal dryness, insomnia, hot flushes and night sweats.

**Post Menopause** – At this stage skin begins to thin, cholesterol levels increase, bones become more brittle with an increased risk of osteoporosis.

Looking at these symptoms, is there any wonder women get irritable? It is important to note that most women go through the menopause with no problems at all but some suffer debilitating symptoms.

There are treatments available in the form of Hormone Replacement Therapy. This works very effectively for some, but it doesn't suit everyone, it can have side effects such as nausea, weight gain, headaches and there are some concerns that it could pose a risk to women with a history of breast cancer. There is also an increased risk of developing Deep Vein Thrombosis, some cancers and stroke. Some women may find relief for the symptoms by taking herbal remedies such as Evening Primrose tablets for example, but these must be taken over a long period of time before any real changes, if at all, become apparent.

In 2003, the TUC conducted a study of 500 Health and Safety Reps regarding the implications of the menopause at work. It found that only 1 in 5 employers provide information about the menopause and that 45% of managers don't recognise the symptoms associated with it. Many women have suffered criticism, flak and even ridicule because of menopause related sick leave and found that working conditions can exacerbate it. Some of the reports recommendations which could help alleviate the condition and help make the working life of menopausal women more comfortable are:

- Provide cold drinking water
- Avoid negative and discriminatory attitudes
- policies in consultation with the unions
- Treat women going through the menopause with respect and understanding
- Training for managers

In the great scheme of things, women are relatively new to the rail industry. It is estimated that approximately 30% of female train staff are coming up to or are already experiencing one



## MENOPAUSE: TIME FOR

of the menopausal trilogy.

There is currently no policy with any of the Train/Freight Operating Companies that we are aware of, for managing women going through the menopause. After a motion from the Women's Representative Committee, the Executive Committee have instructed each District Organiser to raise the matter at Company Council meetings. This process has

already started in one company.

Some women find discussing the menopause embarrassing and the WRC would like to see all Managers trained to deal with this sometimes turbulent life stage with discretion and sensitivity.

It is not about getting more time off work, it's about making the working life of women who are going through the menopause more

## WORKPLACE PORNOGRAPHY A THING

**THE pornography industry is worth an estimated \$97.06 billion worldwide and is now being consumed and produced on unprecedented levels. The Fawcett Society recently commissioned a report called 'Sexism: The Sex Industry's Infiltration of the Modern Workplace' which showed that pornography is still frequently viewed, shared and exposed to colleagues in the workplace.**

**'Girly' calendars on the wall may be a thing of the past but advances in technology have meant that pornography has become vastly more accessible with**

**people using computers, mobile phones, DVDs and magazines to view it. 20% of men admit to accessing pornography at work although it is believed that this figure is not a true reflection and is much higher.**

**The presence of sexually degrading images of women in the workplace causes a hostile environment for female employees. Research has shown that portraying women as 'sex objects' leads to an increase in sexist attitudes and behaviours and will have a direct impact on relationships between men and women in the workplace. All**



## WHERE TO TURN WHEN YOU NEED ASLEF'S HELP



YOU will not be surprised to hear that many of the problems that we experience as women rail workers are common throughout the world. Discrimination, physical abuse, violence and rape are all common experiences for women as they go about their work. Some stories from on-board staff are truly shocking and many suffer terribly at the hand of their colleagues, managers and passengers.

But there were also success stories and encouraging news from Unions. Many countries have good maternity provision and flexible working arrangements— although internationally it is still difficult for train drivers to return to the grade after childbirth - but the fact is that it can and is being achieved. While some countries have laws prohibiting women being train drivers, others have special courses to help women achieve the technical level of education necessary for driver training. Whatever your problems at work - uniforms, toilet facilities, male prejudice against women on the footplate – you can be certain it is happening to another woman somewhere in the world and one thing is clear, if we want to right these wrongs and fight for better conditions we cannot do it alone, we need a strong union!

The question is would you know how to let the union know you have a problem? It doesn't have to be a 'women' specific problem of course. You may not have a uniform that is specifically made for the female shape but equally you could be having problems with the comfort of the new seat fitted on your stock or the lighting on the walking route. You could approach your Driver Manager yourself of course but you'll more likely to solve a problem if you can attack it with ASLEF's support. So, where to start...?

In the first instance you should approach your local rep (LDC) or Health and Safety Rep if appropriate. This is the first step of getting a problem 'in to the machinery'. If it's possible to solve it at the local level then this should be all that's needed. Problems which cannot be solved locally will be passed on the company council by the local rep. Your company councillors will deal with a higher level of management but if they are unable to reach a satisfactory conclusion problems may then get passed up to your District Organiser. Of course the reality is that there are some problems that you may not feel you can raise with you LDC for various reasons. This could include problems of a personal or embarrassing nature, fear of being laughed at or not taken seriously, amongst

others. In these circumstances you can approach your WRC representative who can advise you on the best action to take or perhaps can approach your rep for you and act as support throughout. At all stages issues are dealt with by experienced train drivers with good education and training in the principles of Trade Unionism, representing people and industrial relations.

**Collette Gibson, WRC Representative , District 1**

## A CHANGE

comfortable. The WRC feel that a best practice policy will help make it a smoother transition for what can be a difficult and emotional time.

For more information regarding the menopause go to the NHS website

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/Pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/Pages/introduction.aspx)

**Debbie Reay, WRC Chair, District 8**

## NG OF THE PAST?

workers should be treated with dignity and respect and employers should be striving to close gender equality gaps in workplaces. If employers fail to recognise and deal with these issues they could find themselves subject to sexual harassment cases under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

This is not a question of censorship but believing that pornography does not belong in modern workplaces.

If you are experiencing problems of this nature in your workplace then please contact the WRC member for your district.



**PLAN, the children's charity which works to alleviate child poverty in developing countries has launched a campaign titled 'Because I am a Girl'.**

The campaign aims to transform the lives of the world's poorest girls and ensure that they get the same opportunities as boys.

In some countries girls are seen as a burden and are often treated less favourably. Global statistics show just how huge the challenges girls face can be:

- 62 million girls are not in primary school
- About 140 million girls have undergone female genital cutting and 2 million are subjected to it every year
- More than 100 million girls under 18, some as young as 12 are expected to marry over the next decade
- Teenage girls account for nearly half of the worldwide victims of sexual assault

The 'Because I am girl' campaign aims to improve access to education and legal rights to break the cycle of poverty and discrimination faced by girls around the world. Plan are concentrating on:

- Asking the British Government to make sure that girls benefit as much as boys from the aid money they give to education in developing countries
- Working to create a procedure to enable girls and boys to take complaints against their governments to the UN.

Plan are asking people to pledge their support to the 'Because I am a girl' campaign by visiting [www.plan-uk.org/becauseiamagirl](http://www.plan-uk.org/becauseiamagirl) or texting GIRLS to 84118.



## Campaign points way for improved toilet facilities

**T**HERE has been some success with the WRC campaign to improve toilet facilities for members throughout the country. One Company Council for example has been working vigorously to improve facilities and diagrams to provide their drivers with improved toilets at Depots and turn around points AND to have the time to use them. They surveyed the current facilities along with management and set about introducing cleaner, lighter, more secure facilities. They then demanded improvements in diagrams to allow longer turn around times so that Drivers did not feel under pressure to 'hang on' or get the dreaded 'please explain'. Company Councils do not have to wait for complaints before approaching the employer. But more can be and needs to be done.

Meanwhile an item put forward by the WRC to this year's AAD was well received and has resulted in a national survey being conducted to find out exactly how bad (or good) our toilets are. Intended originally for Health and Safety Reps it is now available for all members to complete. Please take a few minutes to fill in the survey and tell us about your facilities, whether it be the sign on point, depot, turn around point or work site, nothing will change if no one complains. The survey was also used in gender workshops at the Hazards Conference this summer as well as being used as the basis for a TUC document. This is excellent news for ASLEF, once again leading the way in trying to improve the lives of all working people as well as its members. You can complete the survey by visiting the ASLEF website and searching for 'Toilet facilities survey'.

Drivers on London Underground are fortunate enough to have a 'Dignity at Work' policy outlining the minimum standard of acceptable cleanliness, decoration and supplies which should be available in all their toilets. It is used by their Reps to easily identify problems and get them changed.

The issue of toilets is an excellent example of how difficulties you have raised at the WRC open meeting can get change moving within our industry and also on a national basis!

The WRC will keep you informed of developments.

Collette Gibson,  
WRC Representative,  
District No1



## The role of the WRC

THE Women's Representative Committee consists of eight female train drivers from within ASLEF. We are elected by our districts every three years to highlight issues affecting women.

The committee works in conjunction with the local level reps, company council reps, district officers, district councils and the national organiser. We provide advice on issues that would normally require time and resources for colleagues to research.

It is often said around mess rooms that the equalities committees segregate ASLEF, this is not true. This is evident in most of the issues that we raise either with the Executive Committee or at the union's annual conference. When the WRC delegate spoke at AAD about time off for cancer screening - this was for all members. Likewise, the research conducted by the committee into Toxic Shock Syndrome and Domestic Violence was researched and debated on the effects that could be felt by all members of ASLEF.

There are specific issues that only affect female drivers such as maternity provisions, but when advising on the best practice we also make suggestions for paternity, adoption and fertility treatments.

The WRC has built up a reputation for ASLEF within the trade union movement that we can all be proud of.

All of the contact details for the committee members are in the diary. If there are any issues you feel we should address or something you require more information about, we would be glad to help.

Don't forget: International Woman's Day Drinks Reception hosted by ASLEF's Woman's Representative Committee. Details on page 1.

**Wendy Hurst, WRC Secretary, District 5**

### WRC MEMBERS CONTACT DETAILS

#### DISTRICT 1

**Collette Gibson**

#### DISTRICT 2

**Alison Miller**

#### DISTRICT 3

**Alyson Jones**

#### DISTRICT 4

**Pauline Cawood**

#### DISTRICT 5

**Wendy Hurst**

#### DISTRICT 6

**Victoria Young**

#### DISTRICT 7

**Bridget Watson**

#### DISTRICT 8

**Debbie Reay**

For contact details please see the ASLEF diary or contact head office on 0207 317 8600 or [ljames@aslef.org.uk](mailto:ljames@aslef.org.uk)