



## **YOU'RE NOT ALONE**

The physical workplace can be a place of safety for those experiencing domestic abuse from a partner or family member living in the same household. Domestic abuse has always been an issue for trade unions. UNISON Domestic Violence and Abuse policy was published in February 2017 offering useful advice to shop stewards.

With the government putting in place stringent social distancing measures, in the first weekend of UK lockdown, visits to the national abuse website increased by 150%.

The Council has a Domestic Abuse sub-group working on developing a workforce policy on this important issue. Last week in agreement with the sub-group and Trade Unions an interim Domestic Abuse guidance was published on the Source, made available to support employees whilst the policy is being finalised. This will equip managers to provide the best support to employees.

The vast majority of the victims/survivors of domestic abuse are women and children, and women are also considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence, and sexual abuse.

A survey published by Women's Aid last Tuesday found that over three-quarters (78%) of victims reported that Covid-19 has made it harder for them to leave their abuser.

If you are affected by domestic abuse **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

Please speak to someone, like your manager and or your UNISON shop steward they are there to support and offer assistance. More information and useful contact details are on the Source. **Be safe!**

<http://thesource/human-resources/a-z-of-personnel/domestic-abuse-guidance/>



### **Disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black staff**

New York Governor, Andrew Cuomo, described the Coronavirus - COVID-19 "a great equaliser." Yet if everyone is equal and at the same risk, why are reports indicating that Black and Asian communities are disproportionately affected by the virus.

Southwark Council, to our great dismay and sadness, have had 4 employees to date die from COVID19; three are black. Our thoughts are with their families and friends during this difficult time.

Black and Asian groups make up approximately 15% of the UK population, but make up over 30% of the total deaths from COVID19 are from these groups. The Labour Party brought this to the government's attention and a review has been launched. I think we can all guess the outcome of that!

What are the equalities issues that face Black and Asian communities and the possible reason of the disproportionate number of those affected by COVID19? Lets just state a few know facts:

The Black and Asian communities are over represented in overcrowded and poor housing, face a range of structural social and economical inequalities such as, occupying low paid jobs, are mostly in frontline jobs and do not have the luxury of working from home during the lockdown period. A great equaliser? The facts speak for themselves.

May we give tribute and remember all those who have lost their precious lives as well as condolences to the families of these ones. May your journey be peaceful and blessed. **YOUR LIVES DO MATTER**

# No return to work until our safety is guaranteed!

The Tory government is pushing to get 'non-essential' workers back to work. However staff fear returning to work unless we are assured it is safe to do so. Nearly 80% of people believe the lockdown should continue according to the latest opinion polls. The trade unions are already leading the battle to ensure adequate PPE and testing is provided for all frontline staff.



We now have to campaign to ensure that schools are not forced to prematurely open and it safe to return to work for all staff.

The trade unions have no confidence the Tory government are putting the health and safety and welfare of our members first and UNISON along with other school trade unions have already written to the government urging the government not to reopen schools unless a number of conditions are met. (See attached).

We cannot stress enough: we are NOT all in this together with the Tory government. The Tories are rushing us back to work in order to ensure their big business friends maintain their profits. The leopard hasn't changed its spots because of the pandemic.

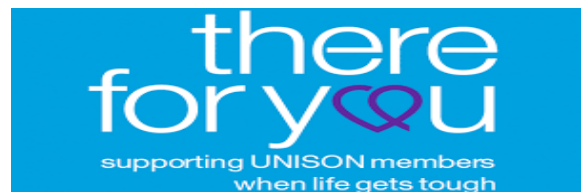
For the past 10 years their brutal austerity programme has decimated local government, the NHS and social care, hitting the poorest in our society the hardest. Poverty, overpriced housing and low pay are all common in these areas, with most subject to gentrification that has brought little benefit to the majority in the most need. And it is clear that the majority of the Covid 19 deaths have already disproportionately hit the working class and the poorest communities, including Southwark. The Tories will try to make us pay for the pandemic and we will have to prepare to fight to save our jobs, pay and conditions in the next few months.

We can only return to work after a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has been carried out to the trade unions satisfaction. Adequate supplies of PPE is available, sufficient hand sanitisers and washing facilities are available, thorough workplace cleaning is carried out on a regular basis, safe social distancing and regular testing is carried out. Above all these measures to be nationally agreed with the trade unions so that trade union branches are not left to fight alone and collective action can be co-ordinated if necessary.

Southwark UNISON is clear: if the conditions are not met, then as a last resort, when faced with a dangerous working environment which you cannot reasonably be expected to avert, staff have the legal right to refuse working if social distancing and government guidance is not followed by the employer. The employer cannot discipline you and/or refuse to pay you if you reject to work due to their failure to provide you with a safe environment to carry out work. UNISON will support staff and will seek to make this action collective action.

**Working from home** Are you experiencing issues such as low moods, feeling anxious, isolation, stress, juggling home schooling and work, pressure from your manager regarding your targets? If so, please contact us. there is support out there. Do not suffer in silence.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, whatever the circumstances, There for You can offer you support. For more information contact us on 020 7121 5620, email [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk) or contact the branch welfare officer, David Paterson, on 07766 384730



**Branch opening times and contact details:** Despite the challenge posed by COVID-19, our phone lines remain open 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday. **0207 525 3600**

**UNISON Branch Administrator:** Jenny McIntosh  
[Jenny.mcintosh@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK](mailto:Jenny.mcintosh@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK) or visit UNISON website  
<https://join.unison.org.uk>

## Useful contacts:

**Branch Secretary:** April Ashley 07766 388308

### Assistant Branch Secretaries:

David Higgs 07766 444132/Pauline Bonner 07931 546220

**National Domestic Abuse Helpline:** 0808 2000 247

**LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline -GALOP:** 0800 999 5428

**ManKind:** 01823 334244