

## ➤ Health and safety in the workplace

### UNISON and important work issues



(a) **Women's Health and Safety:** research carried out by UNISON shows women face many problems, including:

- \* Back pain. At least 100,000 women a year suffer with back problems caused at work.
- \* Physically attacked. One in ten 24 to 34 year old workers have been abused by a member of the public while at work (a third higher than men).
- \* Disorders linked with heavy lifting and repetitive tasks. These are the most commonly reported work-related illnesses.

UNISON has campaigned on a wide range of women's Health and Safety issues, resulting in major progress. For example, it was successful in bargaining that women should be able to wear protective shoes in school kitchens. This then reduced the number of slips, trips, falls and injuries.

(b) **Violence:** this includes serious incidents that cause physical injury as well as threats and verbal abuse. Employees who deal with the public are most at risk, especially those who work with people such as drug abusers and the mentally ill.

UNISON gives guidance and training on how to deal with this, talking with employers to make sure a comprehensive policy is in place. This includes a clear definition of violence at work and methods to assess the risk. UNISON also ensures that staff know about the policy and that training is provided in preventing and managing violence.

(c) **Bullying:** this has extended from the playground to the workplace. Research carried out by trade unions shows that up to a quarter of workers have been bullied in the past five years and about half have witnessed it. UNISON provides guidelines so representatives know how to identify it and the proper actions to take. It also works with employers to create policies so bullying can be recognised and dealt with, including:

- \* a definition of bullying
- \* prevention measures
- \* duties of managers and supervisors
- \* trade union involvement
- \* information and training.

Other areas of concern to UNISON include reducing stress related to work issues such as passive smoking and working with HIV and AIDS.