

CONFERENCE DECLARATION 2020

WOMEN TEACHERS: LEADING IN CRISIS



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The first virtual NASUWT Women Teachers' Consultation Conference took place on Saturday 3 October.

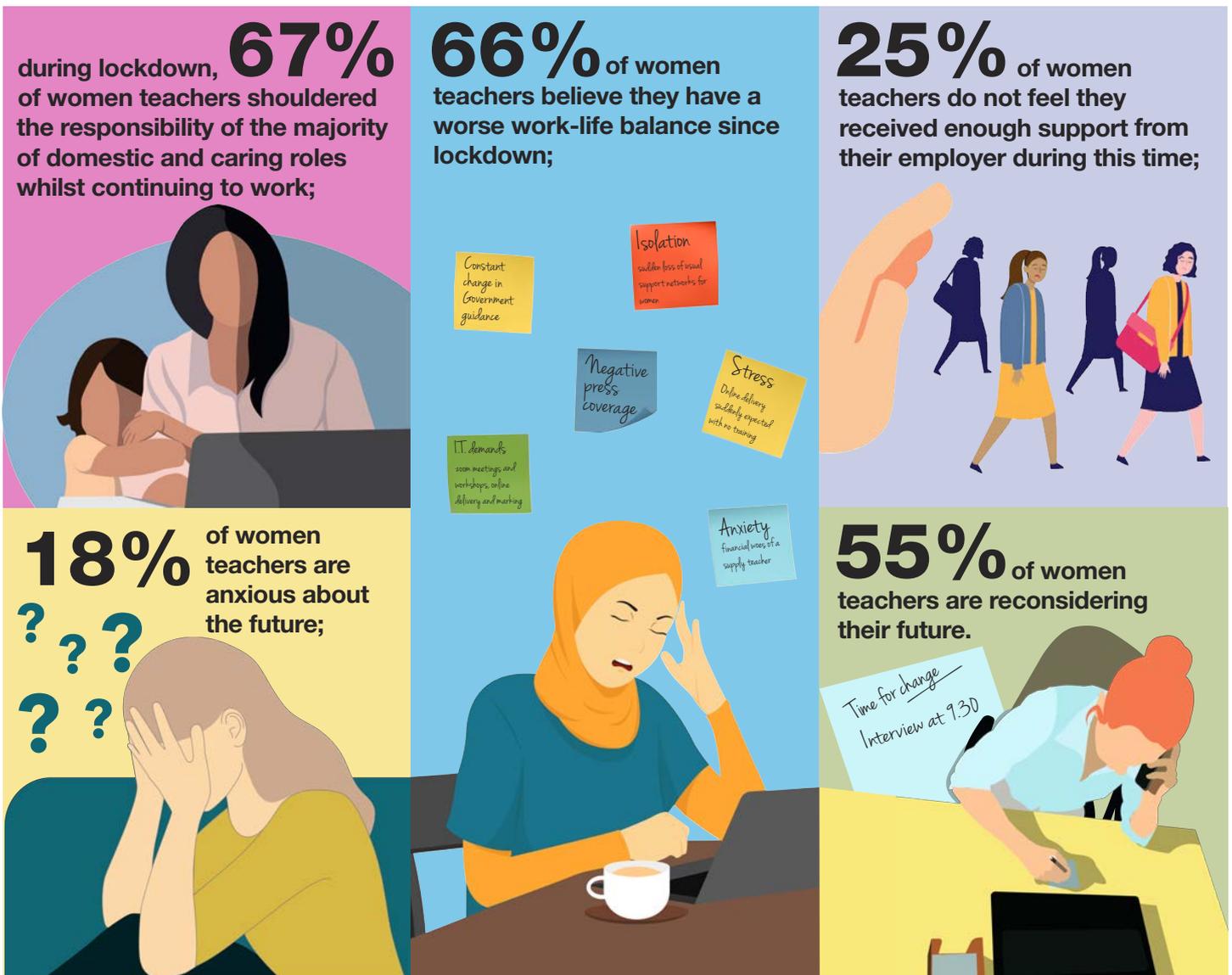
The Conference provides a safe space to network, share experiences, gain advice and support, and shape ideas for the future of the Union and the teaching profession.

Women teachers from across the UK came together in an act of solidarity and support to discuss a range of issues affecting women in these unprecedented times. The discussions addressed concerns in the wider workplace and at home.

The Conference heard that women are a vital part of the teaching profession. During the national lockdown, it was our women members who kept the education of the country going, many doing so by juggling the demands of remote education with the demands of looking after their own children and families. Moreover, as social care services were brought to the brink of collapse or closed, it was women who were left to provide unpaid care for those required to shield at home.

Women members actively participated in discussions on a range of important topics during the day. These included domestic abuse as a workplace issue, and managing the menopause by fully integrating it into 'gender sensitive' policies and provisions concerned with health and safety at work.

The Women Teachers' Consultation Conference 2020 heard that:



Our women members told us that on the whole they enjoyed the enforced break, with many citing extra time with family as the main bonus.

The opportunity to learn new forms of communication was also viewed as a positive consequence for many, although some reported missing their face-to-face interaction with pupils.

“
...we need to remind employers that menopause is real - it is not a capability issue!...
”



“
...I felt increasingly frustrated by the Government...
”



“
...countries led by women have handled Covid better. Can they teach us a thing or two?...
”



The Conference concluded that:

- there is growing concern regarding future exams and testing in schools. Across the UK, teachers are being expected to get pupils 'exam ready' when awarding boards have remained silent on what that actually looks like, and teachers have received limited or no training;
- wellbeing and good mental health must be at the forefront of future campaigns as Covid-19 continues to cause disruption;
- the NASUWT needs more women Health and Safety Representatives to champion gender-sensitive health and safety;
- there is a need for trade unions in schools and colleges to set up Health and Safety Committees, in order to discuss health, safety and wellbeing;
- there is an urgent need for training for NASUWT activists on domestic abuse and violence;
- there is a need for workplaces to have clear policies to deal with domestic abuse, as it significantly impacts on employment issues;
- employers' demands and expectations on teachers during the pandemic are unreasonable and causing stress and burn-out amongst women members, who are coping with additional domestic responsibilities.

NEXT STEPS

- The NASUWT and four other education organisations representing school leaders, teachers and governors have submitted a set of joint proposals to make next summer's A-levels and GCSEs in England as fair as possible amidst the ongoing disruption of the Covid pandemic.
- The NASUWT will continue to lobby all UK governments to ensure the best outcomes for teachers and students during the pandemic and beyond, and will not hesitate to challenge any employer that seeks to take action against any member.
- The NASUWT will continue to actively campaign for robust equality impact assessments of governments' and administrations' plans and arrangements for ensuring that schools and colleges are Covid-secure.
- The NASUWT will develop training, through positive action strategies, in order to target under-represented groups within the Union's membership.



The Gender Equality Challenge

The NASUWT taking the lead

The NASUWT is committed to the challenge of securing equal rights for women and girls at home and around the world, and believes that governments, education bodies and other organisations have a key role to play.

The Union is fully committed to a set of Gender Equality Challenge principles that supports and champions equality for women and girls.

It is five years since the initial declaration, and the NASUWT believes the time is right to revisit and evaluate the work already undertaken.

Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary of the NASUWT, issued a call to arms at the Conference.

“Now is a pivotal time to look at what progress has been made to secure equal rights for women, and how the NASUWT can help to fight gender inequality in the future.”

Specifically, this will involve:

- advancing equality for women and girls in education, employment and economic participation;
- the provision of high-quality public education that ensures the full and equal participation and access of women and girls;
- an end to discriminatory policies, practices and attitudes that prevent the full and equal participation of women and girls in education and in employment;
- action to end violence against women and girls, with funded support for preventative programmes;
- a commitment to promoting the positive and progressive contributions of women to society and economic and cultural life;
- action to end the sexualisation and objectification of women and girls in education and society.

The Conference reaffirmed the NASUWT’s commitment to the Gender Equality Challenge. With the support of the National Officers Committee and the Equal Opportunities Committee, we will be consulting with members as we face the challenges ahead together.

NASUWT

The Teachers’ Union

Hillscourt Education Centre, Rose Hill, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RS.

www.nasuwt.org.uk