

# CWU North West Region WOMEN OF TODAY EVENT

**Mechanics Conference Centre, Manchester  
26th January 2017**

## **Guest Speaker Biographies**

**Karen Bosson** works for Openreach which is part of the BT group and has held technical roles throughout her working life. Karen has been an activist with the union since attending a 2 day CWU Women's Course in 2004. What she learnt there inspired her to get more involved with the CWU.



Karen started as a Women's Rep for her Branch and soon became the official Women's Officer. Karen took on the role of the NW Regional Women's Secretary in 2007 when she also became an Assistant Secretary for the BT section of her Branch. Karen initially became a member of the CWU Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) to help represent the few female members from the technical and engineering sectors of her Branch but contributes to the WAC in many other ways. Since then, Karen has gone on to be more involved with the Northwest TUC and currently Co-Chairs their Women's Committee.

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**Lynn Collins** was appointed Regional Secretary of the TUC in the North West in 2013, the first woman to hold that position.

As Regional Secretary Lynn coordinates and represents around 800,000 workers in over 50 different trades unions in the region. She serves as a member of the North West Leaders Board, and pursues her personal determination to tackle poverty and inequality by serving on the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission and the Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission.

Lynn is also a trustee at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, and was appointed as the Chair of Healthwatch Liverpool in 2015. In her spare time she is Chair of her Local swimming club.

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**Kathy Devlin** is the Clinical Lead for the Beacon Counselling Trust and heads up the Problematic Gambling Support Programme for the North West of England and North Wales. Kathy holds a BSc Hons First Class in Counselling and Postgraduate Diplomas in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Hypno-Psychotherapy and Child Counselling. She holds a Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling, a Master Practitioner in Eating disorders and is a qualified Critical Incident Debriefing and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapist. In addition to Problematic Gambling, Kathy majors on Trauma, Eating disorders, Young people and Critical Incident. Kathy has been the Lead Clinician on a number of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programmes with wide experience in NHS mental health services and has clinically supervised over 20,000 hours of clinical practice.



Kathy is a Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) tutor and lectures on a number of mental health related subjects such as suicide prevention and postvention and is a regular guest speaker at national and international conferences. [www.beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk](http://www.beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk)

**Claire Drummond** started working for Royal Mail (RM) in Jan 2000, before that she spent some time working at British Rail in a signal box. When Clare began working at RM she joined on the union on her first day but it wasn't until 5 years later that she became an active member. Clare stood against the unit rep and won and that was the start of her becoming an active and extremely dedicated trade unionist. Since that Clare has ensured that she has been fully trained and up to date on union procedures as the person who supported her when she was learning told her "Always remember to ensure you know more than management and you won't go far wrong". Clare has always remembered it.



Clare's dedication comes from a strong belief in workers' rights and that all people should be treated equally. That has been her purpose since becoming active in our trade union.

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**Lynne Morris** joined NALGO in 1979 and in the following year became a steward. After 25 years of lay activity and holding various Branch and Regional positions in the lay structures, including Deputy Regional Convenor, Lynne joined UNISON staff. In March 2002 Lynne was elected as the Vice Chair of the North West TUC, a position she still holds today. Prior to working for UNISON Lynne was employed in various posts in Education and Children Services Departments. Her final job was as Principal Education Welfare Officer and Lead Officer for Child Protection in Education in Halton.



Lynne joined UNISON's full time staff in June 2006 as Operational Manager (Development). In 2009 Lynne then became the Regional Manager for the Cheshire and Merseyside Team and in 2015, following a reorganisation in the Region, she became the West Team Manager which covers over 90,000 UNISON members in the North West. Lynne also leads on UNISON's Objective 3 work in the region which includes Campaigning and heading up Labour Link work. In 2013 Lynne was elected as Chair of TULO North West.

Her connection with CWU is a personal one; her husband is a postman and so was her dad.

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**Bexi Owen** is an award winning Jazz singer who loves travelling to perform and make people smile. She set up her Dementia music project Forget Me Never two years ago after singing for War veterans and seeing how much music helped them to engage. Since then the project has visited hundreds of people living with Dementia and will soon be expanded to help other health areas and inspire the use of music as a therapeutic aid!

**Linda Roy** has been the Communication Workers Union Head of Equality since 2008 and was re-elected in 2013. Linda was a post-woman for 15 years then stood for the NEC and PEC and she was the first post woman ever to be elected on to the NEC and PEC in 1995, the year the union merged. With her knowledge and understanding of UK equality and employment legislation, regulations and policies, Linda has been a driving force in ensuring equality and diversity is central to the work the Communication Workers Union and she has developed an extensive network of contacts in trade unions, business, politics, government agencies, human rights, organisations, labour movement and academia to support the work she is involved in. Linda also services the equality needs of the CWU's National Executive Council and Industrial Executives, Disability, LGBT, Race and Women's advisory committees, officers, branches lay officials and members across the UK. Linda sits on the TUC Women's Committee and Linda also sits on UNI Europa Global Women's Committee and Executive Committee. In her spare time Linda enjoys spending time with her family.



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**Joanne Shaftoe** is employed as a personal assistant at a BT Call Centre but has been on full time release to the Tyne & Wear Clerical Branch for over 10 years now. Joanne started as a Branch Youth Officer and has taken a number of lead roles within the branch including Treasurer and Union Learning Rep (ULR) and provides Industrial Relations (IR) representation for branch members. She is the chairperson of the branch now and also Chair of the North East Region and currently holds a position on the CWU Telecom & Financial Services (T&FS) Standing Orders Committee. Joanne has attended many courses aimed at women activists over the year and found it invaluable to have someone to go to when she first started in the union so has now herself become a Mentor within the CWU to help pass on her knowledge and experience to others to help them progress within the CWU. Additionally Joanne is a member of the Labour Party and enjoys spending her spare time with her husband and two step-sons.



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**Jean Sharrocks** started at BT 29 years ago and joined the CWU straight away. Jean worked as a clerical assistant for 10 years. With a lot of persuasion, she managed to move over from clerical assistant to become an engineer working in the outdoor network and that's where she has stayed. 16 years ago Jean became involved with the Middlesbrough Engineering branch of the CWU as their Equality Officer and from that she eventually became Chair of the Branch. The branch merged a number of years ago and Jean is now the Assistant Secretary/Equality Officer at the North East branch. Jean is also the Secretary of the North East Regional Women's Committee and Chair of the North East Regional Equality Committee. For the last 5 years Jean has been a member of and also the Chair of the CWU Women's Advisory Committee. Jean has been an active member of the Labour Party for well over 10 years and 6 years ago was elected as a Labour Councillor for Middlesbrough and was re-elected in last year for another 4 year term. As you can imagine, this tends to leave Jean with very little free time so what time she does have, she likes to spend that time with her 17 year old daughter and my husband Pete.



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**Becky Weller** works as an engineer for Openreach, part of the BT Group, in Northwich and its surrounding areas and Greater Manchester. Openreach employ around 32,000 people to install, support and maintain their network and work on behalf of all the nation's communications service providers. Openreach engineers visit around 29,500 homes and offices every weekday and manage 90,000 repairs to its copper, fibre and broadband networks every week.



Becky started on her career path as a customer service operative for BT when she was 18, but always wanted something more hands on.

Becky stayed at the call centre, based in Warrington, for several years, but when the opportunity came along to become an engineer she embraced it and started down a new track.

The life of an Openreach engineer requires many skills including a knack for problem-solving and a wealth of patience. This is somewhat at odds with Becky's passion outside of her work life – motorbikes and fast cars!

