

# CWU North West Region WOMEN OF TODAY EVENT

**Mechanics Conference Centre, Manchester  
25th January 2018**

## **Speaker Biographies**

**Karen Kendrick** 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 has recently taken up then position of North West Regional Assistant Secretary too working closely with the CWU Regional Secretary & Chair. 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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**Sylvia Lancaster OBE Chief Executive - The Sophie Lancaster Foundation** Following the murder of her 20-year-old daughter Sophie in 2007, Sylvia Lancaster, an experienced youth worker, established the Sophie Lancaster Foundation Charity, whose aims are to create a lasting legacy to Sophie through education and campaigning for the UK Hate Crime legislation to include alternative subcultures. Sylvia is a member of the UK Government Cross Party Hate Crime Advisory Board and was awarded an OBE for "Community Cohesion – especially in reduction of hate crime" in 2014. The Charity works in schools, colleges, prisons and with young offenders challenging the often-violent prejudice towards people from alternative subcultures to create safer communities who celebrate, not fear difference.



Sylvia works closely with Police Authorities throughout the UK, a third of who now record "Alternative Subculture" hate crimes and incidents, delivering training and presentations. She is a regular keynote speaker at hate crime, extremism and anti-social behaviour conferences. Sylvia is also a guest lecturer at several universities. The Sophie Lancaster Foundation were awarded "Upstanding Organisation of the Year Award" at the NO2H8 Awards in October 2017.

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**Margaret Aspinall CBE** Born and raised in Liverpool, Margaret Aspinall is the Chair of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, which has campaigned tirelessly for justice since the Hillsborough Disaster in 1989.



Margaret's 18-year-old son James was one of the 96 football fans who lost their lives in the tragedy, and she has spent 28 years seeking the truth about what happened at the Sheffield stadium.

As one of the support group's founding members, Margaret sat on the committee for several years, before taking on the role of Vice-Chair and finally Chairman in 2009.

She has travelled across the UK and Ireland raising awareness and understanding of the ongoing campaign, and sharing her experience with other families fighting their own causes.

Her determination and drive has inspired many and in 2015 she was awarded a CBE in the New Years' Honours List for her tireless campaigning on behalf of the families.

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**Jenny Mein** Lancashire County Councillor for Preston South East .

Jenny is married with 4 children and 7 grandchildren.

She has been a member of the CWU for almost 30 years and is known to actively support our aims, objectives and campaigns. Jenny was elected to Lancashire County Council in 2005 and was the Cabinet member for Children and Young People in 2008/9. She was Leader of the Opposition 2009/2013 and Leader of Lancashire County Council from 2013 to 2017

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**Jean Sharrocks** started at BT 30 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 2 years ago 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 18-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!

**Jan Fulster** and the WASPI women (Women Against State Pension Inequality) are a campaign group representing almost 3.8 million women born in the 1950s who have been negatively impacted by the mismanagement of increases in their State Pension age. These changes were implemented by the 1995 and 2011 Pension Acts.



Our campaign is about fighting to end the financial hardship that WASPI women are facing as a result of the maladministration of these pensions changes by successive Governments.

There are now over 140 local groups all over the UK and the number is growing weekly. We had all met at the WASPI group in Leigh but came to realise that the location wasn't ideal for women from Wigan and Makerfield as they had a natural bias towards Leigh. We knew that 8000 women in Wigan and Makerfield weren't being reached about the injustice of the 1995 and 2011 State Pension Acts and the two hikes in state pension age and that we needed to do something about this. The ladies from Wigan and Makerfield looked into the options available to us and within a fortnight the group was formed and up and running! We had worked closely with Councillor Pat Draper and she presented a motion on our behalf to Wigan Council which was passed unanimously. Recently Pat has been appointed by the leader of the Council, Lord Peter Smith to become the town's WASPI Champion. Together we hope to raise awareness and work with other groups to push the government to "do the right thing!". Many of us are way out of our comfort zone with appearances on TV, radio and newspaper interviews- but caring passionately about our cause has pushed us forward! We are grateful to union support in raising this awareness with their members.

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**Audrey White-** Union activist and successful sexual harassment campaigner joined the Labour Party Young Socialists when she was 15 years old and demonstrated against the Vietnam War and Barbara Castles' anti trade union bill, "In Place of strife".

Her first job at 17 was as a telephonist for the General Post Office (GPO). Audrey joined the Union of Postal Workers (UPW) which then

became the CWU.

Audrey worked as an international fashion buyer when she lived in Australia for 5 years but when she returned in the 1980's she became an active member of the Labour Party again and joined the Transport & General Workers Union (T&GWU).

Audrey managed the fashion store "Lady at Lord John" during a time when her staff were sexually harassed by the area manager. Audrey defended them and was sacked. What followed was a bitter battle with a quarter of a million pounds injunction brought against her, members of her family and her union. With the help of her union and local activists Audrey won her job back and created an historic victory for women everywhere. Glenda Jackson (see above picture) played Audrey in a movie called, "Business as Usual" based on the dispute.

Audrey was elected to the Women's National Advisory Committee of the T&GWU representing the North-West Region. She was also a founding member of Merseyside Stop the War Coalition organising demonstrations and the Alternative Turner Prize. Audrey re-joined the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and is active in her Unite Community branch and Merseyside Pensioners Association.

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WASPI



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