

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

## Nursery staffing

A leaked draft opinion from the US supreme court has suggested that American women could soon see access to abortion severely limited.



**Empower  
women's  
choices**

## Why attacks on legal abortion are a trade union matter

**Anne McVicker, chair of the national women's committee, and Liz Wheatley, chair of the international committee, explain why this matters to UNISON.**

On 2 October last year, UNISON was proud to stand in solidarity with the thousands who marched in cities across the UK, and in other parts, of the world to protest against new limits on abortions in Texas.

Now it seems the US supreme court has voted to overturn Roe v Wade - a momentous ruling that will result in abortion becoming immediately illegal in an estimated 26 states when it is officially issued.

This latest development is one of many attacks by governments on a woman's right to choose across the world.

The Polish government has brought in a near-total ban on abortion in that country, only permitted now in cases of rape or incest, or when pregnancy threatens a mother's health or life.

The pandemic led to restrictions in access to abortion, even in countries where it is generally accessible, such as the

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Netherlands, where a court rejected a plea for abortion pills to be made available without a physical visit to a clinic.

In Romania, the decision to suspend all non-emergency services hindered both public and private abortion services.

In Northern Ireland, the DUP continues to block access to abortion services.

Why should UNISON be concerned about this?

Women, wherever they are, will always seek access to abortion services. Restricting abortion does not reduce its prevalence. That's why legal, safe, accessible abortion is so important.

However, a clear and concerted effort to limit access to reproductive rights is taking place in many countries across the world.

In many places, attacks on abortion rights are part of broader sustained attacks on human rights and minority groups. This is, in turn, informing the campaigns of those campaigning for office, too.

In 2021, Chile's far right presidential candidate, Antonio Kast, ran on a pledge to prohibit abortion, eliminate the ministry of women and gender equity, withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council, and expand prison construction!

With the authoritarian right gaining political ground, there are few countries in the world where we can be complacent about the accessibility of abortions.

With over a million women in our union, we believe passionately in defending the right to choose. Access to abortion is a trade union issue.

Abortion is also a class issue. Rich women can always access abortion, whatever the legal status where they live. It is working class women who always suffer.

Abortion rights are high in the priorities for our national women's committee.

As the UK's largest organisation representing women, UNISON ran a webinar about defending abortion rights as part of our programme of events around International Women's Day earlier this year.

It's brilliant to see bold local leadership on access to abortion from Ealing, Manchester and Richmond Councils. They are to be congratulated for putting buffer zones in place to protect women from the protestors handing out leaflets and harassing vulnerable women.

UNISON wants to see a change in the law to see buffer zones to protect women in all such places.

The right to have a safe abortion, in private and with dignity, should not depend on where you happen to live. UNISON will continue to speak out about attacks on women's reproductive rights in the UK and internationally.