**2023 National Black Members’ Conference**

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**Motions**

**1. Negotiating to win anti-racist workplaces**

**Carried**

Conference reaffirms that:

1. In employers across our service groups Black members are facing job losses, impaired access to training, discrimination, bullying and restricted career development;
2. For too long employers have made public commitments to tackle race discrimination but have failed to convert words into action;
3. The best way to deliver race equality in public services is for Black workers to join UNISON and then lead the union’s negotiations with the ;
4. Black members self-organisation exists to create space and opportunities to identify their own priority issues and the best ways to deliver progress.

Conference congratulates the work of Black Members in the Eastern Region who worked to create an Anti-Racism Charter which was launched on the UN Day for Elimination of Racism in March 2022. Since then, employers including councils, NHS Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, police forces and Further Education Colleges have signed the Charter.

The charter contains a clear list of actions for employers to work on that will address issues of institutionalised racism. Once an employer signs the charter, the branch is provided additional support on how to ensure that the employer delivers on their commitments.

Conference instructs the National Black Members Committee to

1. Circulate the charter to all regional Black Members’ Groups;
2. Use all communication channels at its disposal to encourage Black members to become active in their union;
3. Write to all branch secretaries and remind them that Black members should always be involved – if not lead – negotiating and bargaining on race equality issues and on all other issues where a Black member is deemed part of the senior negotiating team such as Branch Chair or Branch Secretary;
4. Put the charter to the General Secretary to initiate the introduction, acknowledgement and authorisation of the charter to be implemented throughout UNISON.

**2. Challenging employment barriers faced by newly qualified Black social workers**

**Carried**

Conference notes that there are a disproportionate number of newly qualified Black social workers failing their post qualification programme. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is a 12-month employment-based programme of support and assessment for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs).

Participation in the ASYE supports NQSWs to consolidate their degree learning, develop capability, and strengthen their professional confidence in an employment environment, while being assessed against the post-qualification key standards.

Employers are responsible for the design, delivery, and quality assurance of their ASYE programmes, and passing the ASYE is a condition of the social worker’s employment contract. Failure invariably leads to the social worker’s employment being terminated or, if kept on, being transferred to roles with lesser capabilities and not able to use the title of ‘social worker’.

An article in Community Care magazine (11/10/2021) stated, ‘Black and ethnic minority workers are three times as likely to fail ASYE as white colleagues', figures show from 2018 to 2021, 3.2% of Black and ethnic minority social workers failed to complete their ASYE, compared with only 0.9% of white social workers. Most employers also acknowledge that there is work for them to do in embedding proactive approaches to overcoming inequalities and addressing systemic racism within the service.

Conference calls on the National Black Members committee to:

1. To produce guidance for local government branches including those in devolved nations (where appropriate), where there is an ASYE programme to support them in gathering data and statistical information from employers on pass and failure rates for Black social workers in both adult and children’s social services;
2. Produce a survey for branches to send to newly qualified Black social workers to find out their personal experience of working through the ASYE programme;
3. Highlight to Social Work England, other devolved regulators (where appropriate) and the British Association of Social Workers the findings from the data gathering exercise as a way of persuading them to adopt any necessary changes to the way the ASYE programme operates.

**3. AYSE failures in Social Care**

**Withdrawn**

**4. Call me by my name**

**Carried**

Conference, it seems incomprehensible that currently, Black workers would be suffering the indignity of having their names changed in the workplace to make it easier to pronounce and are often westernised in the process.

Names represent deep personal, cultural, familial, and historical connections. Our name gives us a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong, and our place in the world. Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity. We cannot afford to take a step back into the 1960’s where having our names changed was a common occurrence, expected and too easily tolerated.

Most workplaces have policies in place that promote equal treatment but what happens when they are not put into practice? Black workers should be able to work in places where they feel welcomed, and inclusivity is promoted.

We therefore call on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to work with the National Executive Council (NEC), regional Black Members Committees (RBMC), other Self Organised Groups (SOG’s) and the Young Members Forum to:

1. Create an awareness and provide guidance of the importance of a person’s name by developing a booklet that outlines why a person’s name is important in the fight for equality and respect;
2. Continue to promote the challenging racism in the workplace guidance that highlights the discriminatory and derogatory treatment that Black workers face in the workplace and how to vigorously address it;
3. Request from each RBMC rep on the NBMC to discuss the ‘call me by my name’ topic to ensure strong equality, diversity and dignity is maintained in the workplace for our Black workers;
4. Explore how other campaigns have been developed i.e., the Eastern Region ‘Anti-Racism Charter’, East Midlands Region ‘Having those uncomfortable conversations about racism’ and Northwest Region ‘End Racism @work’ tool kit, that will complement the work of Challenging Racism in the Workplace guidance policy in UNISON.

**5. Black members feeling undervalued and like they don’t belong**

**Carried**

Conference notes that to impose the changes needed to achieve promises of racial justice, equity and inclusion, organisations require all hands-on deck. Black workers continue to demand action against racial injustice and movement toward more equitable workplaces - ones where all employees belong, regardless of their racial or ethnic identities.

To build a culture of belonging and reap the many benefits for employers and employees, leaders first require a clear understanding of what it means to belong at work.

We belong at work when we are seen for our unique contributions, connected to our co-workers, supported in our daily work and career development, and proud of our organisation's values and purpose. However, those unique contributions should not be stifled, hidden or misappropriated.

We have yet to see the depth of the toll that the racial and gender inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic have taken on employees’ sense of belonging in the workplace.

After all, belonging is essential to humans and psychologists rank our need to belong on par with our need for love.

Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to:

1. Work with other self-organised groups to develop a model equity policy to support branches, regions and SOG’s in negotiating with employers to create an environment that empowers Black workers by ensuring they have everything they individually need to succeed;
2. Work with service groups in UNISON to ensure they have a strategy to eradicate negative disproportionate impact of any employment policies or practices and to work towards a fair and equal workplace.

**6. Black workers and non-apparent impairments**

**Carried**

Conference notes that many employers still refuse to accept a worker is disabled and entitled to reasonable adjustments unless their impairment is obvious. However many impairments are not immediately apparent. Black people disproportionately experience impairments such as lupus, diabetes and sickle cell and thalassemia which are impairments that aren’t always obvious to other people.

Some of these impairments also fluctuate, which employers can find hard to understand or accept.

Conference notes that the Equality Act 2010 provides protection for disabled people and that a disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months or more and has a substantial (more than trivial) adverse effect on their normal day to day activities. This includes impairments which are non-apparent and those that are fluctuating.

Conference has previously noted the disproportionate impact of long Covid on Black workers. This can also be a non-apparent and fluctuating impairment. UNISON is clear that in many cases our members will already meet the definition of a disabled person in the Equality Act 2010 and are entitled to reasonable adjustments.

Conference believes that it is important our stewards are fully aware of the impact of non-apparent and fluctuating impairments on Black disabled members. UNISON’s National Disabled Members Committee have produced a variety of resources to help with this including:

1. Our ‘Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments’ guide which can help stewards to successfully make the case that Black members with non-apparent and fluctuating impairments are disabled people and are entitled to reasonable adjustments;
2. Our ‘Stewards Guide to Representing Disabled Members’ – and our companion guide for representing Deaf members;
3. Our new guide to Access to Work which can help pay for the support some of our Black disabled members need in the workplace.

It is also important that branches seek to negotiate disability equality policies with the employer to reduce the risk of Black workers being denied reasonable adjustments due to racism. Having standard policies can help ensure Black disabled workers get the rights and protections they are entitled to. Again, UNISON has resources that can help branches with this including:

1. Our Disability Leave Bargaining Guide and Model Policy;
2. Our Reasonable Adjustments Bargaining guide which contains a model policy and a template “passport”.

Conference therefore calls on the National Black Members Committee to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Seek opportunities to emphasise the rights of Black disabled workers with non-apparent and fluctuating impairments and to encourage branches and regions to do so;
2. Circulate UNISON’s disability equality resources to regional Black Members groups;
3. Circulate UNISON’s Guide to Supporting Members with long Covid to regional Black Members groups.

**7. Securing the legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers - an intersectional approach**

**Carried**

Conference notes that 2022 was UNISON’s very successful Year of Disabled Workers. UNISON takes an intersectional approach to fighting for disability equality in the workplace and many of our Black disabled members have taken key roles in delivering some of the work undertaken in 2022, from leading webinars and events to agreeing new guidance and resources.

The National Disabled Members Committee is now focusing on ensuring the legacy of the year of disabled workers. The aim is to make sure we continue with the gains made in 2022 and that fighting for disability equality remains a central priority for all our branches, regions and service groups.

Conference therefore calls on the National Black Members Committee to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Consider what steps can be taken to contribute to the legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers, focusing on intersectional issues for Black disabled workers;
2. Circulate details of UNISON’s now regular online Disabled Members Officers and Contacts training to Black disabled members;
3. Publicise the Disability Employment Charter, which as a founding member UNISON helped to develop, to regional Black Members Groups.

**8. Young Black workers and mental health at work**

**Fell**

**9. The impact of the cost-of-living rise on Black low paid workers**

**Carried**

The current cost-of-living crisis affects everyone especially given the huge rise in energy prices, but there is evidence that the impact will be disproportionately felt by those who are already struggling to make ends meet and particularly Black members who are over-represented in low wage jobs and often with limited career progression.

Research conducted with the New Economics Foundation, shows that Black members are more likely to be in low paid and insecure work. 18% of Black members are in low paid and insecure work such as having too fewer hours, zero hours contracts, or a short notice of shift patterns, compared to just 15% of overall staff.

In addition to this research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2017 and by the Resolution Foundation in 2018 shows that the ethnicity pay gap is of long standing, and that while some progress has been made to close these gaps many ethnic groups still experience lower pay than White British workers, with workers in Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups receiving the lowest median hourly pay.

Low pay isn't just about struggling to ends meet, it means physical and mental stress and ill-health, affecting family life and the daily battle to put food on the table. It means a life without security and stability and difficulty planning for the future. These are the effects of poverty, and they disproportionately affect black members

Conference call upon the National Black Members Committee to:

1. Work with the National Executive Committee to identify ways in which branches can increase their support for Black low paid workers;
2. Research how the cost of living rise affects Black low paid workers in public services including undertaking a survey of members and branches
3. Consider producing specific bargaining guidance aimed at Black members;
4. Work with Branches to ensure there is specific material aimed at Black members to promote Welfare Services.

**10. Access to immigration advice through UNISON legal services**

**Carried**

Conference notes once again the ongoing and concerning lack of access to immigration advice and representation through UNISON legal services.

Conference notes that for members faced with criminal proceedings, our legal support kicks in straightaway, but that when a migrant worker’s employment is threatened by an immigration issue, advice is limited to a phone helpline or a monthly clinic with an external organisation.

Although this motion has been passed at conference many times, there has been no change for members who require help when their employment and immigration issues collide.

Meanwhile, Health Trusts and private care sector employers continue to recruit in the Philippines, India and Africa and all new migrant workers recruited in UNISON are almost exclusively on work permits. The exploitation of migrant on work permits is of particular concern. This means that access to advice linking immigration and employment is more crucial than ever.

Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to make interventions in all relevant UNISON structures to give members access to immigration advice and representation through their union’s legal services as a matter of urgency.

**11. Building participation of Black members within branches**

**Carried as Amended: 11.1**

UNISON is a growing union, and we seek to recruit members from all backgrounds across thousands of workplaces, despite this many branches have found it difficult to recruit and engage with members from Black communities there are barriers both external and within UNISON that also impact on black participation.

Some of the barriers include:

1. Black Members’ Officers don’t always have information about black members within their own branches which impacts on engagement;
2. Geographical make up of some branches make it impossible to access other black members;
3. Some branches do not have or have not appointed a Black Members’ Officer with some branches never having a designated Black Members’ Officer since their inception.

It is important that branches take a proactive approach in engaging black members, this starts by ensuring there is an appointed Black Members’ Officer within each branch. Branches need to ensure there is appropriate training in place on how to engage hard to reach communities.

Conference instructs the National Black Members’ Committee to:

1. Formulate guidelines for branches to ensure there is representation from Black members in their branches;
2. To identify barriers to recruitment of Black Members’ Officers within branches and create action plans on how to reduce these barriers;
3. To work with branches to ensure they have targeted recruitment events, during Black History Month, University open days and linking with professional bodies e.g. NESWA, and ensure attendance at induction events for new recruits;
4. To identify agencies who are recruiting from abroad and cascade information to branches;
5. To identify best practice and cascade these to other branches to share best practice on how to increase black members participation;.
6. Support black members with mentoring to be able to take up leadership roles in branches.

**12. Cost of living crisis and Black workers**

**Carried**

Conference notes that everything is going up fast – 12% now but forecasts of upwards to 22%. However, the pay of many UNISON members has been effectively frozen for almost 12 years. We can’t make ends meet!

We have a cost-of-living crisis because of the decisions made by political leaders and their friends running big business and financial institutions. We note how much money the rich have, and that we live in the sixth richest country in the world, yet more and more people are reliant on food banks, and are forced to choose between heating and eating.

In recent months our costs have gone up - fuel prices, food prices, transport, national insurance – as have the profits made by BP and Shell, the energy companies, MPs wages and billionaires bank balances.

Everything but our wages. The news continues to report of people struggling to get by, doing without essentials, whilst according to an article in the Times on 10 ways to save money, one rich family have given up their £40k a year live-in nanny for a £10k au pair to help with their financial struggle. It really is a world of them and us.

This conference rejects the propaganda being put forward that workers’ pay rises cause inflation. The inflation rises have many causes chief of which is the profiteering of many companies based on shortages of labour or supplies or the perversity of a market system artificially raising prices even when shortages do not apply in the UK such as energy.

The Governor of the Bank of England has been calling for wage restraint to protect the economy whilst continuing to amass a personal fortune with a salary of half a million pounds a year - making sure none of the wealth generated through inflation comes to our class!

This year we have seen shocking figures that show there’s plenty of money for big pay-outs for bosses and shareholders but nothing for our pay, funding our services and ensuring no-one is left cold or hungry:

1. Rail Company Profits – Greater Anglia made £85m profit from 2014-18 but chose not to reinvest it in services/infrastructure and instead paid out £61m to shareholders. There are similar stories from all the rail companies;
2. Energy Companies – EDF increased profits by three times those last year to £728 million, Scottish Power made £925 million profit, E.on increased their profits by two-thirds to £245 million – all in the first six months of this year;
3. Oil – BP profits £7 billion, Shell’s profits rose to £10 billion both again in just half a year;
4. BT boss Philip Jansen – his pay went up 32% this year, to £3.5m. He’s now paid 97 times more than the lowest paid BT worker, and 86 times the average paid BT worker. Earlier this year, BT opened a foodbank in one of its call centres – for its own staff. Members of the Communication Workers’ Union now call him Foodbank Phil. He was already grossly rich – before coming to BT, he was CEO of Worldpay;
5. Network Rail CEO Andrew Haines –trousered almost £600,000 this year. The top 10 highest paid at Network Rail got a total of £3.68m, at a time whilst they’re advertising customer service assistant and station control assistant jobs for £20,000.

However, this conference notes the widening of the wealth gap between the richest and poorest. The gap between CEO income and workers’ pay rose to 63:1 in 69 companies surveyed in 2021/22 financial year, an increase from 44:1 during 2020/21. In some companies it has risen to 100:1. In the period to 2019/20 this had been reducing. Surveys also showed that the Ethnicity Pay Gap had also fallen in some workplaces but was now back on the rise again. Black Workers continue to be over-represented in the lowest paid grades.

There is no mandatory monitoring of the Ethnicity Pay Gap. However, it is most likely that an increase in wealth at the top would lead to a widening ethnicity pay gap. This conference notes with concern a trend where the ‘Cost of Living’ crisis would be most severely felt by black workers. There’s plenty of money out there, our job is to be organised and make sure the money is used for decent homes, schools, hospitals, services and pay.

National Black Members Conference supports UNISON policy of the nationalisation of the energy companies to nationalise rail, mail and transport and all other services that have been privatised, (with compensation to shareholders only based on proven need) to bring costs and prices down to an affordable level.

National Black Members Conference believes the only way that our members, especially Black members, can stand up to the crisis is by taking action to win at or above inflation pay rises. TUC surveys have reported in the past that where there are proper collective bargaining arrangements covering workplaces, the ethnicity pay gap can be reduced completely. This conference believes that Black members will be at the forefront of the campaign to beat the ‘Cost of Living Crisis’.

This conference therefore resolves to call on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to:

1. Work with the National Executive Council (NEC), Service Group Executives (SGEs) and Self-organised Groups to organise and fight against in-work poverty by supporting at- or above- inflation pay rises for all our members;
2. Continue to pursue mandatory ethnicity pay gap data is published by all employers and in the meantime agrees to work with SGEs and Self-Organised Groups to call on all employers and sectors within which UNISON organises to produce ethnicity pay gap data;
3. Encourage all Black members to be involved in campaigning for at- or above-inflation pay rises and support Black Members to put themselves forward for activist positions at all levels of the union;
4. Collate all data to show the impact of high inflation on Black Workers and their families to provide material for publication in Black Action;
5. Support national and regional workshops for members to assist in raising the above but also providing some help in dealing with household budgeting problems;
6. Support young Black members to become active in all aspects of this campaign.

**13. Equality is UNISON business**

**Carried**

Conference notes that one of UNISON’s main aims is, as per UNISON’s Rule Book, “to seek to ensure equality of treatment and fair representation for all members and to work for the elimination of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, sexuality, gender identity, disability, age or creed”.

To achieve this, UNISON seeks for branches to have Equality Co-ordinators, whose role it is “to be the central liaison point for equality in the branch and to distribute information on equality issues”.

An audit in the North West this year identified that less than half of branches had an elected Equality Coordinator, less than a quarter have a Black Members Officer.

Conference believes that if branches cannot recruit to this core officer position, then it will be that much more challenging for self-organised groups to develop and flourish, and it will be less likely that those branches will consider the equality dimension to bargaining work, including bargaining for Equalities with the employers they organise in.

When circulating matters relating to equalities including updates, issues etc to Branches, Equality Coordinators, where in place, should also be included to avoid unnecessary delays in information being received, especially where urgent action is called for.

Conference therefore calls on National Black Members Committee to:

1. Work with the NEC, the National Women’s Committee, the National Disabled Members Committee and the National Young Members Forum to develop and deliver a campaign about why equality is UNISON business, including highlighting the resources available to activists, celebrating where UNISON has successfully made work better for those with protected characteristics and demonstrating the opportunities available to members if they choose to get more involved with UNISON;
2. Consider how training and workshops that are delivered to on Equalities can be shared with all UNISON activists;
3. Produce a series of articles showcasing a diverse range of equality coordinators, exploring why they became activists, what they’ve achieved and what equality means to them;
4. Utilise the skills, knowledge and experiences of Equality Coordinators, especially around matters of equalities, including when reviewing the annual Branch Development Plan;
5. To encourage all branches to send delegations to every National SOG Conference.

**14. Solidarity with Ghana’s LGBT+ community**

**Carried**

Conference notes that for many years Ghana’s government has been extremely hostile to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and plus (LGBT+) people.

Currently same-sex sexual activity is prohibited under the Criminal Code 1960, which criminalises acts of ‘unnatural carnal knowledge’. This provision carries a maximum penalty of three years’ imprisonment. Only men are criminalised under this law.

The law was inherited from the British during the colonial period, in which the English criminal law was imposed upon Ghana. Ghana retained the provision in its first Criminal Code upon independence, which remains in force, and continues to criminalise same-sex sexual activity today.

However, the situation has become even more dire in recent years.

In July 2021, a group of eight Members of Parliament introduced a private member’s bill, the ‘Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill’, aimed at criminalising the ‘promotion of LGBT+ rights’, essentially criminalising any LGBT+ advocacy in Ghana.

In August 2021, the anti-LGBT+ Bill received its first reading. The Bill’s scope is extensive.

The law would criminalise, with up to five years in prison, identifying as a LGBT+ person, having a gay relationship or intercourse.

Marrying or intending to marry someone who has had gender reassignment surgery would also be criminalised, with up to five years in prison.

The bill addresses “gross indecency in public”. Any public show of affection between people of the same sex, or where one or some of the people involved identify as a gender different to their sex, or have had sex reassignment, would also be criminalised.

It would also criminalise “cross-dressing”, enabling prosecution of anyone dressing in a way perceived as different from their biological sex.

A clause targets intersex people, and would allow the state to recommend “corrective therapy” or surgery. It is not clear whether this could be forced. A medical practitioner would judge what binary sex should be assigned.

Any LGBT+ “allies”, whether individuals or advocacy and support groups, could be prosecuted and face up to five years in prison.

Anyone made aware of gay acts who fails to report them could also be criminalised.

Since the bill has been announced there has been a sharp rise in violence against LGBT+ people, which has included a big rise in ‘corrective rape’.

Conference notes that support for the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values – an umbrella groups of religious and conservative groups in Ghana - is coming from right-wing conservative groups in the United States and Europe.

Conference therefore instructs the National Black Members Committee, working with the national executive council, National LGBT+ committee and international department as appropriate, to:

1. Seek appropriate ways to show solidarity with Ghanaian LGBT+ organisations;
2. Work with Rainbow Migration and other appropriate organisations to lobby the Home Office to take urgent steps to improve the ways in which it deals with LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees;
3. Work with Labour Link to raise these issues with the Labour Party.

**15. Solidarity with the people of Yemen and Yemeni trade unions**

**Carried**

National Black Members Conference notes that the war in Yemen is in its eighth year and continues to lead to an ongoing humanitarian disaster. We further note evidence of attacks upon trade unionists in Yemen. We believe that UNISON and other UK trade unions should respond to the crisis in Yemen with the same urgency as has been shown in the case of Ukraine.

In July 2021, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) called on the authorities in Yemen to cease interfering in trade union activities and to return properties that were owned by the General Federation of Yemeni Trade Unions (GFYTU) and had been confiscated. According to the ITUC, the Yemeni government had also been trying to set up organisations under its control, which purported to be trade unions, in an effort to weaken the GFYTU.

The ITUC further reaffirmed its support for international initiatives aimed at ending the war in Yemen and called on the parties to the conflict to respond positively to the calls and initiatives for dialogue, peace and a pathway out of the humanitarian emergency that existed - and still exists - in the country.

According to the United Nations, about 24 million Yemenis – 80 percent of the total population – need humanitarian assistance; 14.4 million Yemenis are in acute need. Over 2.25 million children under five years and more than a million pregnant and lactating women and girls are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021. Between 5 and 15 percent of pregnant women and girls are facing obstetric complications but lack access to emergency obstetric and new-born care services. Around 16.2 million people were expected to be hungry in 2020. Five million people face emergency conditions, and nearly 50,000 are already experiencing catastrophic conditions.

This National Black Members Conference believes that UNISON should express solidarity with our fellow trade unionists in Yemen including those organised by the Yemeni affiliate of the Public Services International (PSI), the Public Service Union.

This Conference resolves to:

1. Refer this motion to the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) with a view to their encouraging other UNISON Black workers in the fight against war waged against Yemen;
2. Calls for the NBMC and the National Executive Council (NEC) through its various International Committees to try develop and implement a strategy that enables enable UNISON members and branches to express effective solidarity with Yemeni trade unionists, including twinning agreements and exploring the possibility of sending a delegation to Yemen and inviting a delegation of Yemeni comrades to visit the UK.

**16. Reimbursement of NHS immigration surcharge paid by migrant workers who work in the health and care sector**

**Carried**

Conference is clear that public services in the UK could not exist without migrant workers.

At the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, different petitions were raised calling on the government to scrape the payment of NHS surcharge by migrant workers. In October 2020, the government agreed that those migrant workers who were not on a health/care visa could apply for a reimbursement every six months that they work in the Health & Social Care Sector, starting from 31st March 2020.

Most of the migrant workers affected by this surcharge are Black - predominantly from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and South American countries. These are people who are legally resident in the UK on different types of Residence permit including skilled migrant workers, Family Route visa, Private Life Visa, Student visa, etc. They could only apply for reimbursement after paying as their visas are not tied to the Health & Social Care sector and they could choose to work in other sectors. Applicants were required to show proof of having worked an average minimum of sixteen hours per week in that sector for the six month period that their application covered.

Conference welcomes the campaigning work of UNISON and other organisations that persuaded the government to provide reimbursements and also inform our members about how to apply for it.

Conference expresses extreme disappointment that nearly two years since the reimbursement scheme was introduced, many applicants are yet to receive payment.

Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee to urgently raise the issue with the union’s National Executive Council and discuss what further support can be offered to members who have not received reimbursement.

**17. Stop deportations to Rwanda**

**Carried**

Conference acknowledges that Black Migrants, including Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) Asylum Seekers, face an unprecedented attack on their Human Rights.

We saw on 14 June 2022, four asylum seekers were forced onto a plane in tears, some in shackles, waiting to be sent 4,000 miles from the United Kingdom (UK) – the place they were seeking refuge – into a dangerous and uncertain future. The European Court of Human Rights (EHCR) issued 11th-hour injunctions to stop the deportations. The ECHR stated it had regard to the concerns before it ‘in particular [raised] by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), that asylum-seekers transferred from the United Kingdom to Rwanda will not have access to fair and efficient procedures for the determination of refugee status as well as the finding by the High Court that the question of whether the decision to treat Rwanda as a safe third country was irrational or based on insufficient enquiry gave rise to ‘serious triable issues’.

The refugee charity Care4Calais learned that former Home Secretary Priti Patel was warned by the Foreign Office that refugees should not be sent to Rwanda amid human rights concerns. Founder of Care4Calais, stated: “The government’s plan to send refugees to Rwanda is a threat to the lives of refugees,’ while the Home Office had particular concerns about the ‘ill treatment’ of LGBT+ people being more than ‘one off’.

Against this backdrop, the UK Tory government is pressing ahead with their brutal deportation plan after brief pause for them to resolve their own leadership wrangling and election. They have resumed issuing notices of intent despite legal challenges by Care4Calais, Detention Action and the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), in the high court. And despite the grounding of the first planned flight to Rwanda on 14 June following legal action.

Subsequently in August 2022, newly arrived asylum seekers received letters telling them their asylum claims are inadmissible, the government intends to deport them to Rwanda to have their claims processed there and they have 14 days to raise objections to their forced removal.

Conference notes that the Rwandan government has violently restricted freedom of speech, used arbitrary detention and torture, spy networks and suspected assassinations of people abroad. According to a survey by The African Population and Health Research Centre with the Health Development Initiative, LGBT+ people are particularly at risk. A significant number of LGBT+ people reported hostility from family and communities, facing stigma and discrimination. LGBT+ people may be subjected to conversion therapy to exorcise their transgressive feelings.

The Home Office has even admitted there is a risk to LGBT+ refugees if deported to Rwanda, while Foreign Office travel advice is ‘individuals can experience discrimination and abuse, including from local authorities. There are no specific anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBT+ individuals in Rwanda.

The ECHR ruling on the UK government was exceptional. It rarely intervenes and only when people’s basic human rights are at serious risk. The ECHR ruling has increased the commitment of this UK Tory government to withdraw from the EHCR which provides judicial checks and balances.

And the Rwanda deportations are the latest in a host of aggressive, immigration policies. We are now 10 years into the hostile environment that makes health professionals, colleges, employers into border controllers. The same hostile polices wrongly removed British citizens of the Windrush generation who rebuilt post-war Britain.

The hostile environment has now been rebranded now as “fixing a failing asylum system”. Conference, we know exactly what this means – more of the same racist and LGBT+ phobic immigration policies.

Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to:

1. Seek to work with Rainbow Migration and other appropriate organisations to lobby the Home Office to take urgent steps to prevent LGBT+ refugees being sent to Rwanda;
2. Work with Labour Link to raise these issues with the Labour Party;
3. Work with the National LGBT+ committee, the Equality Liaison Committee, regions and other sections of UNISON to campaign on this issue, particularly on campaigns against the ‘Removal of Rights Bill’;
4. Seek to draw any lessons from the legal challenge made by PCS union for future campaigning regarding the UK government policy of forced removals to Rwanda, on behalf of their members who work in the Home Office.

**18. Refugees deportation to Rwanda**

**Carried**

The Nationality and Border Act which became law in April 2022, opens the door for the Government to transfer its Refugee Convention responsibilities to another country for money estimated at £1.5 billion, by forcibly expelling asylum seekers to Rwanda, following Australian example, which has been condemned as cruel, inhuman, or degrading.

Under the new five-year trial scheme, once asylum seekers are sent to Rwanda, their cases will be processed under Rwandan legal system, and they will not be able to return to the UK. It will include women, children, transgender, and LGBT, particularly the latter, who turn to the UK for safety will be in danger. Rwanda presents a hostile environment as local officials accuse them of deviant behaviour, which is inconsistent with local values and sentiments, and are often imprisoned.

The British government is engaging in a harsh trick, declaring all asylum seekers illegal unless they come through approved channels which are virtually non-existent. It is worth noting that no analysis has been carried out by the UK government to gauge the adverse impact on people’s (especially children’s) emotional, psychological, and physical well-being because of putting them in a pseudo- detention country whose history doesn’t support upholding fundamental human rights.

Though the first flight on 14 June was cancelled because of the Court intervention, the government still plans to have new deportation flights to Rwanda. According to the Guardian, some newly arrived asylum seekers in hotels have received letters telling them that their claims are deemed inadmissible for consideration in the UK and cases will be processed in Rwanda despite there being advice from government officials against sending asylum seekers there.

Newcastle City Branch deplores this horrendous stance of the government which would deny the right of asylum seekers to be considered for refugee status in a safe country. Moreover, it would have negative psychological, emotional, and physical impact upon those waiting to be deported to Rwanda. Likewise, their parents, partners, children, and relatives would feel pain and distress which could result in mental health issues.

There is, therefore, an urgent need that the government reverses its policy of deporting some asylum seekers to Rwanda due to their having arrived in the UK via the routes the government considers encourages human trafficking. Conference, therefore, calls on the National Black Members Committee to work with NEC to:

1. Work closely with Public and Commercial Services Union, Care4Calais and Detention Action in their effort to thwart government’s designs of deportation;
2. Work with Labour Link to lobby Parliamentarians to repeal Rwanda Deportation Act;
3. Work with the relevant authorities to introduce a fair system of migration;
4. Create awareness amongst the public against inhuman and harsh treatment against people seeking haven in the UK.

**19. Detention of refugees, asylum seekers and others without their status in the UK**

**Carried**

Conference condemns the continued political and physical attacks on refugees, asylum seekers and others without their status in the UK many of whom are UNISON Black Members.

Conference accepts that many people, even with the right to work, are often in precarious situations due to their immigration status.

Conference notes indefinite immigration detention in the UK has come under increased scrutiny, with urgent calls for a time limit coming recently from the Home Affairs Select Committee, the Joint Committee on Human Rights and HM Inspector of Prisons. The Home Affairs Select Committee “found serious problems with almost every element of the immigration detention system.”

Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee to work on a campaign to deliver a 28- day statutory time limit on immigration detention.

Conference reaffirms the right of all workers to employment which is safe and secure. To this end Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee to support the call made by a number of migrant bodies, anti-racist, poverty eradication groups and others that all undocumented and precarious people residing in the UK should be granted indefinite leave to remain.

Conference also calls on the National Black Members Committee to raise this with the Labour Link National Committee.

**20. Opposing anti-refugee Tory policy**

**Carried**

No one puts themselves or their families at the dangerous risk of crossing waters on a dinghy or pay criminals to seek escape to a safer haven if they are not desperate.

The right for refugees to escape war and persecution and seek safety elsewhere is set out in the Refugee Convention of 1951, which has protected asylum-seekers worldwide for decades. In the UK, anti-refugee laws are putting that basic right under threat. Unless we fight back, the UK will no longer be a safe haven for those in desperate need.

We believe that the Tory move to prevent refugees from settling in the UK and transfer them offshore to Rwanda, a country that has had a questionable approach to human rights in the past, is an inhumane and wholly racist policy and provides insufficient safeguards to protect them and their rights. The Tory Party’s spin on wanting to prevent the exploitation of refugees through people-trafficking is a simply a guise under which to implement their policies. Lives will still be put at risk.

Given that a large proportion of those that arrive in the UK do so by means that are deemed illegal, all of these people would be criminalised and considered for relocation. The policy will also affect people who have already settled in the UK, for example, the recent migration of refugees from Afghanistan – these people could also be sent to Rwanda.

Action is necessary because:

1. We believe that people seeking protection from war and persecution should be welcomed and that everyone’s claim for asylum should be treated equally and fairly;
2. The hostile environment has persistently emboldened racism and the rise of the far right;
3. Anti-refugee laws will not just impact asylum seekers trying to escape conflict to the UK. It is also giving rise to a new version of well-known racist rhetoric of ‘send them back’ and ‘not welcome here’;
4. The notion that Black persons seeking asylum would be safe in Rwanda fails to take into consideration the grave concerns around human rights within this country and the impact of ethnic discrimination that those seeking asylum may be subjected to.

Conference, we welcome that UNISON has signed up to the campaign and pledge to fight Anti-Refugee Laws, however, more needs to be done.

We call upon the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to:

1. Work with UNISON to defend the right of asylum seekers and refugees to seek safety from war and persecution, here in the UK;
2. Encourage the development of a national campaign and seek to obtain the support of the wider UNISON body, to include statements and public opposition to the division that these policies continue to create;
3. Publicly speak out against attempts to criminalise and punish those who make their own way to safety by seeking to obtain the support of appropriate bodies such as Care4Calais, to challenge and seek the repeal of the anti-refugee laws which will risk the lives and wellbeing of millions.

**21. Oppose the Nationality and Borders Act 2022**

**Carried**

This Conference notes:

1. · The Nationality and Borders Act (NABA) become law on 28 June 2022;
2. · The government's continuing plans for offshore detention in Rwanda, and the Care4Calais and PCS union legal challenge that contributed to the halting of the first planned flight taking detained refugees to Rwanda;
3. That the case was is currently in the Royal Courts of Justice to determine whether the Rwanda policy itself is lawful;
4. The major protest outside the court, took place on the 5 September, with a day of action called by the TUC, Care4Calais, Stand Up To Racism, PCS union, Refugee Council, StatusNow4All, Amnesty International UK, including Unison, Unite, GMB, NEU, CWU, FBU, UCU, NASUWT, ASLEF, TSSA & BFAWU;
5. The Twitterstorm (11am - 12 noon) on 19 July and workplace day of action that got #StopRwanda trending #3 in United Kingdom trends;
6. The Britain-wide TUC, Care4Calais and Stand Up to Racism local protests outside of London on Saturday 16 July;

This Conference believes:

1. · The NABA (with its two-tier system of 'legal' and 'illegal' refugees that would prevent some 99 percent of refugees from seeking asylum and its threat to the citizenship of 6 million people in Britain), the Rwanda offshore detention policy, and latest plans to tag refugees, are racist;
2. · That the trade union movement should mobilise alongside others to oppose racist division at a time when workers are being hit by attacks on living standards in the cost-of-living crisis;
3. · That campaigning has been effective - such as the legal challenges by Care4Calais and PCS against 'pushbacks' in the Channel, and to stop the first scheduled Rwanda detention flight, and the mass actions in Peckham and Hackney in London and in Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow that have stopped immigration raids.

This Conference request the National Black Member Committee resolves:

1. To continue to encourage our union to support and mobilise for the ongoing protests for the #StopRwanda Campaign;
2. · To request unison sign and circulate the pledge to oppose the NABA launched by Care4Calais, already supported by hundreds: https://fighttheantirefugeelaws.org/;
3. · To continue to encourage Unison to campaign against all elements of the Act.

**22. Cost of living impact on mental illness in Black workers**

**Carried**

This Conference notes that Black communities continue to experience complex factors that significantly and adversely affect their mental health. The recent cost of living crisis is impacting significantly on Black members across the country.

Black communities are already more likely to experience distressing events that affect them adversely due to racism, discrimination and inequity affecting people’s psychological well-being.

Concerns about, and the real life impact of, increasing living costs increase a person’s risk of mental illness as some experiences may even be traumatising.

Black individuals often lack access to culturally competent care. In some Communities, mental health problems are rarely recognised, or spoken about, because they may be seen as shameful or embarrassing leading to mistreatment.

Conference calls on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to campaign for the Scottish Government to support the below actions:

1. To research how gaps in knowledge create and maintain inequalities in how Black members access and receive services;
2. To formulate an assessment tool which employers can take to identify Black people’s needs and support them with mental health;
3. Educate family and friends and colleagues about the unique challenges of mental illness within the Black Community.

**23. Eliminating racism in Scottish sport**

**Carried**

“25th July 2022, Scottish Cricket was found to have caused systemic discrimination and racism over many years, in a report by Plan4Sport called Changing The Boundaries. They found the governance and leadership practices of Cricket Scotland to be institutionally racist. It confirms 448 examples that demonstrated institutional racism. Reoccurring themes were mapped against 31 indicators of institutional racism, with 29 failing to meet the standard required.

“As part of the review 68 individual concerns have been referred for further investigation.

“Other key findings:

1. 62% of all survey respondents had experienced, seen, or had reported;
2. A lack of any EDI or anti-racist training at all levels;
3. No consistent process for handling racist incidents;
4. A lack of diversity from board level, Hall of Fame and talent pathways;
5. Lack of transparency in the selection process.

“Findings should serve as a wake-up call for sport right across Scotland. it has highlighted significant weaknesses in the governance of sport, and the commitment of other agencies, including Sport Scotland and Scottish Government to tackling racism in our game. These failings happened for years.

We therefore call on the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) to:

1. Support campaigns to ensure the Plan4Sport framework is immediately adopted into all funding agreements as a conditional part of funding for Sports Governing Bodies in Scotland;
2. Support calls for an independent sports regulator to prevent further issues from being swept under the carpet within governing bodies; and to lobby to allow Sport Scotland, or a new independent body, powers to investigate issues of discrimination or poor governance through whistleblowing of issues by anyone concerned by the conduct of a Sports Governing Body.”

**24. Young Black workers and the cost of living crisis**

**Carried**

Conference notes that the cost of living in the UK has surged to crisis levels, with increasing energy prices, food prices and housing costs, against a background of wages which over the past decade have not kept pace with inflation.

Conference further notes the specific impact of the cost of living crisis on Black workers. A report from People Like Us in August 2022 found that Black people were disproportionately affected by the cost of living crisis, and that this disparity started in the workplace, where Black workers are systematically disadvantaged in relation to their white colleagues. One aspect of these disadvantages is the ethnicity pay gap, estimated by the Resolution Foundation to cost Black workers £3.2 billion in 2018. Since 2018, Black workers have only experienced increasing barriers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These disparities hit even harder for young Black workers. Conference notes the January-March 2022 ONS figures for unemployment across ethnic groups, which show that for those aged 16-24, unemployment rates stood at 20% for people of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin, at 30% for people of Black African/Black Caribbean/Black British origin, but at 11% for people of a white ethnic origin.

Conference further notes the TUC report from 2018 highlighting barriers to young Black workers, which noted that in addition to higher unemployment rates for young Black people, young Black workers are more likely to be in insecure or precarious employment, are more likely to experience racist abuse at work, are less likely to be given positions on apprenticeship schemes, and experience a ‘qualifications gap’ which means that whatever their level of education or training, young Black workers earn less than white workers of a comparable education level.

Conference notes the strong work done to date by UNISON’s National Black Members Committee to campaign on the ethnicity pay gap and the other disadvantages experienced by Black people in the workplace, and the further important work done by UNISON’s Black Members Committee in highlighting the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black workers.

Conference believes that UNISON has a key role to play in addressing the impact of the cost of living crisis on Black workers, and the specific impact on young Black workers.

Conference asks the National Black Members Committee:

1. To continue to campaign on the ethnicity pay gap and to work with the National Executive Council to campaign for legislation addressing the ethnicity pay gap;
2. To highlight the specific impact of the cost of living crisis on Black workers, and on young Black workers;
3. In their work on the ethnicity pay gap and racism in the workplace, to highlight the additional barriers faced by young Black workers in the workplace, and to consider producing a factsheet highlighting the difficulties faced by young Black workers, and the ways that these have been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis;
4. To work with the National Young Members Forum to promote UNISON’s work on the ethnicity pay gap to young Black members;
5. To promote the importance of UNISON membership to young Black public sector workers, and promote the work that UNISON does to address the cost of living crisis, both by negotiating for higher wages and in campaigning against racial discrimination in the workplace.

**25. Amendment to National Black Members’ Conference Rules and Standing Orders No. 9**

**Carried**

In section 9. Limit of speeches

Delete 9.4 “If there has been no speaker against the motion, no questions asked about the motion and any amendments have been accepted by the mover of the motion then there is no right of reply as there is nothing to reply to.”