



NATIONAL DISABLED MEMBERS
CONFERENCE 2015

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Motions

1. Guidance on rights for disabled workers

Carried

This Conference believes that many disabled workers are unaware of their rights as disabled employees.

This Conference also believes that without awareness of rights, such rights cannot be pursued, and become endangered through lack of use.

This Conference further believes that

(i) it is important that information about disabled workers rights be available in a wide range of accessible formats;

(ii) young workers in particular are more familiar with accessing and sharing information through information technology and social media, and that information on rights should be available through those routes.

This Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to

1. audit the material currently available to disabled members on their rights at work – from UNISON and from other sources;
2. seek to work with the Communications Department to produce a guide to rights at work for disabled workers, such guide to be available in a range of formats, including online etc.

Composite A. Following through on reasonable adjustments

Carried

(Motions 2 and 3, Amendments 2.1, 2.2 and 3.1)

This Conference welcomes the continued support at Young Members' Weekend for a meeting of disabled young members, a process by which those members can feed their issues into the National Young Members' Forum work plan.

This Conference notes that at the most recent Young Members' Weekend, young disabled members raised the issue that occupational health services have identified reasonable adjustments, but employers/managers fail to follow through on implementation.

This Conference is also concerned that some managers do not understand or acknowledge their roles and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments.

This could be because they have had no disability awareness training. As a result disabled staff face both direct and indirect discrimination when trying to get the adjustments they are entitled to.

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Very often disabled members do not know their rights under the Equality Act 2010 and turn to their union representatives or Branch Officers for assistance. Not all reps/officers are aware of how to support disabled members in these circumstances.

This Conference agrees with young disabled members that they are particularly vulnerable to this issue as they may – through lack of experience and/or acquired assertiveness skills - be unfamiliar with how to challenge employers and managers effectively on this issue.

This Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Carry out a survey of all Branches to determine the extent to which disabled members have faced difficulties securing reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- 2) Seek to work with the Communications Department to raise awareness of the issue by, for example, an article in InFocus explaining this issue and what activists can do to support workers in this situation and publish the same guidance on all Unison channels of communications to the full membership
- 3) Develop guidance for stewards and Branch officers on how to negotiate and secure reasonable adjustments in the workplace in order to support disabled members
- 4) Seek to work with the Communications Department to produce a simple accessible document available to members on the procedure for reasonable adjustments and what action can be taken to chase-up implementation
- 5) Acknowledge that this affects other minority groups such as Black Disabled Members
- 6) Proactively encourage branches to organise disability awareness training for their reps/officers

4. Supporting Black Members with learning difficulties

Carried as Amended by: 4.1

Conference recognises the work that has been done at all levels of UNISON to encourage and meet the access needs of Black disabled members that are actively involved at all levels of UNISON.

Conference notes the disproportionate numbers of Black people with learning and physical disabilities. Conference further notes the commitment of the union in ensuring disabled members are enabled to fully participate in all of the work of the union.

Conference, to enable Black Disabled Members to be active in UNISON, it is proposed that the National Disabled Members' Committee:

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- 1) Work with the NEC, the National Black Members Committee, Regions and Branches to make available literature in appropriate accessible formats to convey information.

This would further endorse UNISON's existing policies of equality and diversity in relation to Black Disabled Members within its membership. This could eventually lead to a Black Disabled person with a learning disability representing UNISON at a presidential level.

5. Autism in the Workplace: Autism and trade unionism

Carried as Amended by: 5.1 & 5.2

Autism is a term which covers a wide range of conditions that reflect neurological differences among people. A neutral descriptive definition is: Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

Conference this is a trade union issue for a number of reasons as it affects both adults with autism who experience difficulties in the workplace, their parents, carers and children with the condition, who have difficulty working or becoming employed because of a lack of understanding, care/support by employers who may see the employee's caring responsibilities and needs as a problem. Branch representatives have reported difficulty in negotiating the range of adjustments that could remove barriers and make the workplace more accessible.

A motion was passed unanimously by the TUC Disabled Workers' Conference in 2013 entitled Autism in the Workplace and issued its first guide Autism in the Workplace to support autistic workers and their families.

How Workplaces Can Create Difficulties for Autistic Workers

- **Discrimination:** Treating the autistic worker differently from, or less favourably, than other workers. An example may be failing to put into practice reasonable adjustments recommended by occupational health.
- An employer failing to acknowledge that the cognitive processing of an Autistic person is different to their own.
- Anxiety is a core factor in an Autistic person's profile, partly due to their cognitive processing systems. Acute anxiety can be misinterpreted as being Behavioural problems and lead to their needs being dismissed.
- Lack of communication and support. The individual person should be core to all meetings and decisions, in order for the person to feel secure and valued by the employer.
- **New work processes:** The imposition of new arrangements at work may cause difficulties for workers on the autistic spectrum. Anxiety
- **Self-confidence may be decreased:** By experiences of discrimination or bullying.

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- Performance management: May cause undue pressure and distress to autistic workers.
- Working environment: Autistic workers may need a 'benign' environment with fewer distressing factors.
- The size and design of a work place can intensify anxiety and confusion and increase an Autistic person vulnerability to Sensory overload issues e.g. Noise, light, smell.
- Disruption of routines. A worker with undiagnosed autism may not get support or adjustments, and even a professional diagnose may not guarantee a willingness by the employer to provide appropriate support and adjustments
- Unexpected events or disruption of work schedule. These will cause stress, anxiety, lack of confidence and low self-esteem.
- Conflict with colleagues or managers. This may be due to Misunderstanding rules, policies or instructions. Difficulties organising ones work.
- Feeling that autistic positives/skills are not recognised. This can occur despite managers and colleagues receiving training if there is no willingness to accept the person for who they are.

The cognitive processing abilities of an Autistic person are different from that of a Neurotypical person, communications and understanding will be different not defective.

Conference calls on the National disabled Members' Committee to do the following:

1. Develop a UNISON guide to Autism in the Workplace based on the TUC guide to provide guidance to union reps and branch
2. To Encourage and recommend to Branches that they organise autism awareness training for reps and Branch officers
3. Resolve to challenge the discrimination and negative portrayal of autistic people
4. Resolve to campaign for autism-friendly workplaces, recognising that the measures involved will benefit all workers."
5. Issue guidelines to Branches showing the types of support Autistic workers require in the workplace

6. Induction Process for New Self Organised Group Officers

Carried as Amended by: 6.1 & 6.2

Taking on a new role is always a challenge; there are new people to meet, rooms to find, processes to learn and documents to read.

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These challenges are often magnified when they are faced by a disabled person. There is currently no process in place to help new Self Organised Group Officers to learn their role and become accustomed to what is expected of them.

New Officers, including disabled members may feel lost and confused. They don't always know where to go for help. This is a particular problem when the new Officer is not a Steward or is unfamiliar with the union.

An induction process for new Self Organised Group Officers, in line with that given to other Officers, would solve this problem. It would give disabled members the support they need to take on the role, allow them to grow in confidence quickly and take a full part in the business of the branch and UNISON.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Promote and encourage the induction and training of new Self Organised Group Officers
2. Investigate the creation of a standardised induction pack to be given to all new Self Organised Group Officers.
3. Promote the adequate support of disabled members to enable them to take up a Self Organised Group Officer role within a branch
4. Encourage Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, Black and Women, Disabled Members to stand for the officer post.

To report back to National Disabled Members Conference 2016.

7. Disabled members delivering public services in times of austerity

Carried

Conference condemns the continued attacks on the funding of public services.

Austerity cuts are providing an environment for employers to continue to cut/reduce vital services, outsource services, or develop shared services with other public bodies and private organisations.

The cuts are being used as a reason by employers to increase the use volunteers, have continual reorganisations of staffing structures and reductions of staff.

UNISON's experience teaches us that outsourcing, privatisation and shared services does not always reap the rewards of reducing costs and improving services that employers claim. In fact the quality of service normally suffers especially when the private sector is involved.

Public services are under attack on many fronts, and any attempts to undermine its importance must remain a priority for our union. We must fight to protect local democratic accountability and the services our members provide to the communities where they live, work and serve.

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Government plans for continuing job losses in the public sector (where a higher proportion of disabled people work) mean there is no prospect of improvement. Among disabled people who do have jobs, a much higher proportion than non-disabled people, work part-time, and in lower-paid jobs.

Conference, we already know that the previous coalition government's attack imposed since 2010 have brought massive suffering to millions of people. Disabled people are among the very worst hit.

Conference, our members face mass redundancies, and for those that do manage to retain a job, there is an onslaught of attacks of terms and conditions, as well as increased workload and the impact of that increased workload is likely to be greater for disabled people particularly when the employers mind set is based on the Medical not Social model of disability.

Conference we believe there could have an increased mental health impact on disabled workers having to deliver public service cuts arising from discriminatory Tory ideology. For example disabled workers, who have managed to keep their jobs in adult social care, are at the sharp end of reducing or removing services to disabled people. This of course impacts on them, their stress levels and ultimately may force them to leave the public service or become mentally or physically unwell when faced with the challenge of working in a way that fundamentally offends them and challenges their personal value base.

Conference, the union must stand up for disabled workers facing discrimination in the workplace whether this is through misuse of sickness absence procedures where an absence was related to disability, or unfair selection for redundancy, or failure to provide proper adjustments enabling the worker to do the job.

Conference calls on the National Disabled members committee to work with Service Groups, the NEC, Labour link, Regions and branches to continue to:-

1. Provide guidance and support to branches and regional campaigns on fighting the cuts with links to relevant disability campaigning groups
2. Defend member's jobs and terms and conditions in light of the cuts
3. Provide guidance to branches on using the Equality Act to ensure that the union stands up for disabled workers facing discrimination in the workplace
4. Provide and distribute UNISON's definition of the Social model of disability, working with Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to ensure that our relevant courses reflect the social model of disability
5. Build union membership and organisation amongst disabled people in the workplace
6. Work with other Trade Union groupings via the TUC structures, particularly in the run up towards local elections

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8. Access to Work

Carried as Amended by: 8.1

The Access to Work (AtW) programme is a fund that helps disabled people start a new job, or remain in employment, with practical support for “reasonable adjustments”, which employers are required to make by law. Without AtW many disabled people would be prevented from doing their jobs because of the barriers they face; for those looking for employment, some may face considerable difficulty in such a competitive marketplace, as employers will be concerned about extra costs involved if they employ a disabled person.

The Works and Pensions Select Committee inquiry report - “Improving Access to Work for Disabled People” - stated that staff from the Department for Work and Pensions often failed to understand the needs of disabled people and that the AtW programme was helping only a minority of the people it could benefit, due to inadequate funding and a lack of awareness of the programme. The previous Government didn't respond to the report, however, The Department for Works & Pensions' Impact Assessment of this report was published the day after the General Election. One of the areas covered was “Value for Money Reforms” and the first option proposed was to set a cap on the maximum value of support per user. The Impact Assessment also states that “we must achieve a balance between meeting customer need and achieving value for money for the taxpayer”.

Until now, individuals could seek an unlimited award to assist them into work but from October 2015 there will be a cap on how much the £108m fund can pay to people who use it. As of October 2015, Access to Work will provide awards up to a limit set at one and half times average salary (a limit of £40,800 per person per year), This could be particularly damaging to those who need expensive equipment to function in the workplace. It also affects those who have PAs and people who use taxis to go to work. The Government wants to make £12billion in welfare savings and those using AtW are going to find it more difficult to receive the funding they require.

Under the new proposals, disabled people may not have put in place the reasonable adjustments they require which could affect their performance at work and some employers will interpret this as a capability issue, which could lead to dismissal.

When the public sector is faced with massive cuts to their budgets and staff are being made redundant, disabled people are more than likely to be the ones who will be selected for redundancy. Now that the Department for Works & Pensions is openly talking about “value for money for the taxpayer” disabled people are more vulnerable than ever.

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members' Committee to:

1. Raise grave concerns with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the findings of the Impact Assessment on the Improving Access to Work for Disabled People Report.
2. To update (if necessary) the UNISON Branch Guidance on “Using the DWP's Access to Work Scheme for Disabled Members” and to promote to

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members/activists so that they are aware of the process for applying for AtW or employer sponsored support in the workplace.

3. Write to all branches highlighting the changes in provision by AtW to make them aware of the changes to funding and the impact this may have on their disabled members who are in receipt of this support;
4. Publicise the AtW scheme in UNISON eFocus and U Magazine using case studies of where it works well but also highlighting issues that disabled people face when they are unable to put in place adjustments they require for them to effectively do their job.
5. Work with the appropriate UNISON structures to ensure that the issues regarding changes to AtW provision are widely known so that they can be raised in negotiation with employers.

9. Additional impact of learning difficulties on Mental Health

Carried

Conference 2014 acknowledged the particular mental health concerns for disabled LGBT people and agreed an action plan to start to address this.

Conferences notes the additional impact that being diagnosed with a learning difficulty or disability can have upon our mental health.

People who are not aware of their specific learning difficulty or disability or those being diagnosed with a learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, can experience problems at work, be stereotyped and deemed poor performers and find themselves down the capability or disciplinary route.

More emphasis needs to take place to ensure that this disability or difficulty is identified early to avoid discrimination and therefore employers will have to put in reasonable adjustments to assist someone to carry out the roles of their job.

Currently there are few disability awareness / equality courses mandatory for supervisors and management to attend. It is important that today's leaders are able to recognise signs of learning difficulty / disability and ensure that individuals get the necessary tools and support to fulfil their job roles.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Issue good practice guidance to branches on learning difficulties and disabilities and encourage branches to include this on their bargaining agenda
2. Increase awareness to members by putting information on the UNISON website
3. Work with other self organised groups to raise further awareness.

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10. New Ways of Working and Reasonable Adjustments

Carried

Conference notes that government cuts mean employers are looking for new ways of working to save money without cutting jobs. Often referred to as Lean or Agile Working, these methods were developed by Toyota and are predominantly used in manufacturing industries. If implemented correctly they can bring financial savings and improve working conditions. While we recognise the value of this approach we need to ensure the impact on Disabled Members is considered at every stage.

Conference is concerned that some employers are adopting measures to cut costs, reduce waste and increase productivity while ignoring key principles like effective communication, increased career development and improving staff satisfaction. Employers are failing to recognise that delivering public services is not a production line and a 'one size fits all' approach will not work.

Hot desking may reduce accommodation costs but a study by the University of Wolverhampton found competition for space makes employees feel undervalued, reduces morale and effects productivity. The impact on disabled people is higher with increased risk of infection; eye strain from monitors that don't suit individual needs; muscular problems and fatigue from unsuitable chairs; loss of control for learning disabled people who rely on structure; and stress and anxiety for people who need a safe and accessible place for medication or disability related equipment, this type of working can actively aggravate an individual's disability or condition

Open plan offices accommodate more people but as average person's auditory band width is only 1.6 people they make hearing, talking and concentrating difficult. The additional adverse impact on people with hearing impairments is significant, stress increases and productivity is reduced by up to 66% and people with mental health issues report the constant noise has a detrimental impact on their health.

Home or Remote Working reduces overheads and is increasingly popular with employers. Employers are responsible for staff health and safety when working at home but many don't carry out risk assessments or provide appropriate equipment. Home working can be a good option but reduced social interaction and lack of support and structure can be devastating for some Disabled Members. Negative impacts including isolation and depression; pressure from no defined end to the work day; alienation from workplace changes; lack of development opportunities; and being overlooked for promotion can affect anyone working from home but as some employers use home working to avoid making reasonable adjustments in the workplace the potential negative impact on Disabled Members is significantly higher. There are also significant detrimental financial impacts that employers are passing onto the individual i.e. permission from mortgagor/landlord to cater for business use, additional broadband usage, additional household insurance costs that are generally unregulated.

Other aspects of Lean Working such as a production line approach, generic job descriptions, zero hours contracts, mobile working, commissioned outcomes and compressed hours can all have a differential negative impact on Disabled Members.

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

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1. Develop guidance for Branches and Regions to support Disabled Members to request reasonable adjustments to new ways of working; and
2. Liaise and work with Service Groups and bargaining support, to share best practice examples of implementing new ways of working

11. Coming Out to get Facility Time

Carried

Conference will note that participation in self organisation is integral to the core work and values of UNISON. Yet activists are increasingly reporting that employers are cutting back on facility time and questioning the purpose of the meeting.

Activists are feeling pressurised into disclosing their disability, sexual orientation or gender identity when they may have previously not been out at work to justify their request for time off.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee working with the regional disabled members groups to:

1. Issue guidance to branches regarding disclosing disability, sexual orientation or gender identity at work.
2. Encourage branches to raise the issue with employers.
3. Monitor for issues arising from requests for time off.

12. Welfare Reform

Carried as Amended by: 12.1

This Conference recognises that the current Government's Welfare Reforms are an attack on the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society.

With the return of a Tory Government in May, and their commitment to make a further £12 billion of cuts to the Social Security budget, there is no doubt that the level of poverty will increase and make life even more intolerable for those whose lives depend on benefits.

The manifesto confirmed previously announced plans to lower the amount of social security payments that a household can receive to a maximum of £23,000 a year – although excluding disabled people claiming disability living allowance or personal independence payment – and to cap overall welfare spending every year in the next parliament.

And it confirmed plans to freeze working-age benefits until April 2018.

Although it repeats the claim that this freeze does not include disability benefits, the party has already admitted that this protection will not extend to the main component of employment and support allowance (ESA) or the work-related activity group top-up component of ESA, but only to the ESA support group top-up.

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In December 2014, the Welfare Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament commissioned research on the cumulative impact of welfare reform on households in Scotland from the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University

They reported that when the current welfare reforms come to full fruition, which is now unlikely before 2018, they can be expected to reduce incomes in Scotland by £1.5 billion a year, or £440 for every adult of working age. The impact falls very unevenly on different places, and on different households.

Removal of Housing benefits from all Young People under 25 will adversely affect young disabled Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people who could be forced out of parental home after family's reacting badly to them being LGBT.

There is no reason to believe that the situation in other parts of the United Kingdom will be any different.

Claimants with health problems or disabilities also lose out badly. Reductions in incapacity benefits are estimated to average £2,000 a year, and some of the same people also face big losses in Disability Living Allowance as well as reductions in other benefits.

Once details of their proposals are known, Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:-

1. Liaise with the NEC and Labour Link to launch a campaign to have all regressive changes reversed;
2. Campaign that, in particular, the movement of disabled claimants from Disability Living Allowance to PIP should be ended, and the Work Capability Assessment and punitive benefit sanctions regimes should be scrapped;

13. Minister for Disabled People

Carried as Amended: 13.1

Shortly after the General Election this year the prime minister announced that the new minister for disabled people would be Justin Tomlinson, Conservative MP for North Swindon. Tomlinson has a strong anti-benefits and anti-human rights background. Tomlinson is a former national chairman of Conservative Future, the youth wing of the Conservative party and has been an MP since 2010. He is a party loyalist, with a strong record of voting against the interests of sick and disabled claimants.

According to "They work For You", Tomlinson:

- Voted strongly for the bedroom tax
- Voted very strongly against raising welfare benefits at least in line with prices
- Voted very strongly against paying higher benefits over longer periods for those unable to work due to illness or disability

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- Voted against 365-day exceptions on contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance for those undergoing cancer treatment
- Voted against setting the lower rate of Universal Credit in relation to disabled children at a minimum two-thirds of the higher rate
- Voted very strongly for making local councils responsible for helping those in financial need afford their council tax and reducing the amount spent on such support
- Voted very strongly for a reduction in spending on welfare benefits
- Voted very strongly against spending public money to create guaranteed jobs for young people who have spent a long time unemployed.
- Voted in favour of repealing the Human Rights Act.

Tomlinson's responsibilities as minister for disabled people include:

- cross-government disability issues and strategy
- Employment and Support Allowance, Work Capability Assessment and Incapacity Benefit Reassessment Programme
- disability benefits (Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance)
- carers appeals reform
- fraud and error (including debt management)

Tomlinson has some interest in health issues, but does not seem to have shown any great interest in disability issues during his time as an MP.

From all this it is blatantly obvious that our so called Minister for Disabled People is not acting in the interests of disabled people at all but instead has been put in his position to aid the Tory Government in implementing its £12billion in welfare cuts and to increase the oppression and marginalisation of disabled people in the UK, once again targeting a group of people many of whom are unable to speak up for themselves.

This Conference therefore calls upon the National Disabled Members' Committee to work within Unison's structures and also alongside organisations that are run and controlled by disabled people, to mount a campaign to highlight the way this government is using the position of Minister for Disabled People to push through it's cruel and savage welfare reforms and to call for the resignation of Justin Tomlinson. Such a campaign should include publicity in the media and encouragement of Unison members through branches to raise this issue with their MPs. It should emphasise that disabled people aren't benefit scroungers and are increasingly struggling to cope with rising living costs and increased charges for adult social care services.

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We should also make people aware of the fact that most disabled people do want to work and that, if we were supported to find and keep work, we wouldn't be dependent on benefits and charity. We should draw attention to how the Government has been closing organisations like Remploy and instead of helping those people find alternative work with mainstream employers is now proposing to restrict Access To Work which will make it even more difficult for disabled people to find work and then punish them for not working by looking at further cuts in Employment & Support Allowance.

14. Taxation of Disability Benefits

Fell

EM1. Good Care Costs

Carried

Conference is concerned that in August 2015, five of the biggest care providers wrote to the Chancellor stating that the National Living Wage could result in a "catastrophic collapse" in the number of care homes.

UNISON believes that the living wage (set by the independent Living Wage Foundation) should be paid to all workers and not the minimum wage 'plus' that the Conservatives announced as the National Living Wage.

Conference is appalled that in some parts of the care sector the impact of increasing costs are being pushed onto the workforce, with terms and conditions starting to be cut by care providers sighting lack of funding from Local Authorities. Combined with the cuts to tax credits, and the potential of reduced hours for carers, the overall income to their households will be reduced and is very likely to impact on whether people will remain as care workers.

Additionally our Disabled members care or their families care is under threat of cuts in provisions and quality of service.

Conference, UNISON has been campaigning for adequate funding for care, to raise the voices of our homecare workers and to improve the homecare sector. We are proud of Our Save Care Now campaign. We want councils to commission care provision properly and with good funding by calling on councils to sign UNISON's Ethical Care Charter, a set of commitments that together ensure the health, safety, and dignity of the UK's most vulnerable people.

However Conference we won't just let the care providers off the hook because of funding, they need to be good employers, **too many homecare visits are short, rushed and undignified ,our members aren't paid fairly or** properly, (including travel time) and they should be properly trained...surely that's not too much to ask for!

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC, Health and Local Government Service Groups and Labour Link to

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1. Work with labour MP's to raise the response to increasing pay from employers and ensure there is ring fenced funding at local level
2. Ensure that the rise in the minimum wage to the National Living Wage is adequately funded by Government
3. Raise the profile of the Save Care Now campaign amongst Disabled members

15. Access to Work

Carried as Amended by: 15.1, 15.2 & 15.3

This Conference recognises the importance of the Access To Work Scheme which enables disabled people in employment to have support including specialist equipment, a support worker or sign language interpreter or taxis to and from work, for example. This support is vital to ensure disabled people can continue to attend work and make a valuable contribution to the work of their employer and the services provided.

Deaf people experience particular difficulty using the Access to Work Scheme because the process for booking sign language interpreters isn't accessible. Accessible advice should be provided by the Department for Work and Pensions in BSL about how to book interpreter services, whether agency fees should be met from the Deaf person's budget (including whether 20% Value Added Tax should be met by the Deaf person's allowance), confirmation and cancellation arrangements, invoicing and payment options. Access to work should advise where Deaf people should find qualified interpreters who are regulated by one of the UK regulatory bodies - i.e. Regulatory Body for Sign Language Interpreters and Translators, National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deaf/Blind People and the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters. Services for Deaf people should be available through a computerised system that is accessible, as delays in payments for interpreters affects the number of interpreters available and reduces it to only those willing to wait an unreasonable amount of time before payment of fees is processed for services already provided.

However, the Department of Work and Pensions, who administer the scheme, are now starting to ration the support provided and are lowering the cap on the amount a person can receive each year. This may mean, for example, that some disabled people will have to struggle into work on public transport when they have extreme difficulties with this or pay for taxis themselves. It also means they won't have the support whilst they are in work to undertake their role. We understand that, in particular, the DWP are considering limiting support for travel costs within work which could mean that disabled people who need to travel during work will no longer be provided with taxis. Unfortunately not all employers will be prepared or able to afford to pay for this support, putting the jobs of these disabled workers at risk.

Conference notes that Access to Work have been applying inappropriate and inconsistent hourly rates to British Sign Language Interpreters in the workplace'

This conference welcomes the recent discussions the National Disabled Members' Committee has had with the Department of Work and Pensions regarding the use of personal assistants directly employed by disabled people. We also welcome the

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submission made by UNISON to the House of Lords Select Committee's review of disability aspects of the Equality Act 2010.

This Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members' Committee to encourage the National Executive Committee to work with other unions to lobby the Government with regard to the impact of Access To Work cuts and to mount a campaign making it clear that disabled people do want to work and yet the support we need to be in work is under threat.

We also instruct the National Disabled Members' Committee to continue to use all channels available to it to influence government bodies, especially the Department for Work and Pensions to improve resources to support disabled people's opportunities to have paid work.

Conference also asks the National Disabled Members Committee to consult with deaf caucus workers and the deaf community and their Unions and Interpreter Professional organisations with regard to campaigning for a consistent hourly rate for British Sign Language Interpreters.

16. The fight for fair sickness absence procedures and 'Disability Leave'

Carried

This Conference notes with concern the election of a 'Tory' Government with a majority in Parliament and believes that this will signal a worsening of the rights and the likely employability of disabled people. The Conservatives have indicated their contempt for Industrial Tribunals and are not supportive of any restrictions on employers in their dealings with their employees.

In light of these issues, Conference believes that it is likely that:-

- a) Employers will use more regressive and oppressive sickness absence management processes and policies to enable them to rid themselves of disabled workers
- b) Employers will fail to consider appropriate 'Disability Leave' for workers
- c) Employers will be discouraged in the employment of workers known to have disabilities
- d) Unemployed disabled people especially those with a mental health issue will continue to be harassed and cajoled into inappropriate or unsuitable employment or lose benefits

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to seek for ways to:-

1. Campaign for the protection and improvement of rights for disabled workers
2. Celebrate the ways in which the employment of disabled workers benefit society as a whole

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3. Work with Labour Link and other organisations with views compatible with those of UNISON, to achieve these aims.

EM2. Open University closed to disabled students

Carried

The Open University's (OU) is a flexible system of learning that supports the largest disabled student community in the UK. Last year almost 20,000 disabled students studied at the OU and a large number were UNISON's Disabled Members. Conference is concerned the planned closure of Regional Centres announced on 15 September may mean the OU is closing its doors to disabled students.

Regional Centres are at the front line of the OU and dedicated local staff provide essential support to our Disabled Members, and other Disabled Trade union members, who access courses to support career progression. The proposal states "no locally based services will be withdrawn, only the location from which they are managed will change" but while this may appear small change the impact for disabled students will be devastating.

The importance of individual support for disabled students can't be overstated. Face to face meetings or somewhere familiar to drop in for a chat can be the difference between success and failure. While meetings organised elsewhere or telephone conversations are alternatives these are not suitable for everyone. The knowledge and experience of local staff cannot be replaced. They understand some students are only comfortable with familiar people or environments, they know the services available in their area and can support the development of tutor student relationships when a tutor is not locally based. Individual support is rarely provided by one person and consistent involvement of Regional Centre staff can make a difference.

Tutorials are group meetings, often held in Regional Centres, with arrangements made so everyone can attend and participate. If Regional Centres close tutorials are likely to be held in the remaining offices or arranged in temporary venues that may not be accessible. If a student is unable to attend because of a disability related reason 'it may be possible to arrange some individual tutor sessions by phone or email' but this may not be accessible to some disabled people. If a student needs extra support tutors can hold one to one tutorial sessions in Regional Centres. These take account of disabled students needs and may involve BSL interpreters, note-takers or other support services. Under the proposals these will be replaced by 'special sessions' over the phone. If these are not suitable for a disabled student a meeting will be arranged but may involve the student travelling hundreds of miles to one of the remaining offices.

Regional Centres play a fundamental part in organising exams and local knowledge is vital for disabled students who need accessible venues, extra support, specialist equipment or home examination. How will someone in Manchester know if an exam centre in Cornwall is accessible for a specific student? How can someone in Milton Keynes recruit the appropriate invigilator for a home exam in Newcastle? Is it reasonable or practical for a Birmingham based student having to travel possibly to another country to discuss exam needs? If a disabled student isn't confident about

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their exam arrangements how will they be confident enough to pass. Regional Centres are controlled environments with support on hand and make sure exams are well run. The alternative is unthinkable.

OU vice-chancellor Peter Horrocks said "This recommendation allows us to enhance student support in a way that's simply not possible in our current office network and offer our students the sort of support they expect and deserve".

But the proposals are a move towards a call centre model of education that will disenfranchise disabled students and prevent disabled members achieving their full potential. The proposals go to the OU Council in November and if approved staff will be consulted before changes are implemented in February 2017. There are no plans to consult students or disabled people and little evidence that equality implications have been considered. Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC to:

1. Ensure disability issues are a central part of UNISON's campaign against the closure of Regional Centres, including liaison with other Trades Unions;
2. Campaign for a full consultation to be carried out that includes students and disabled people's groups; and
3. Request information on how the OU have complied with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty with particular consideration of disability issues.

17. Attacks on access to justice is an attack on people with disabilities

**Carried
(Amendments 17.1 & 17.2 lost)**

Conference will note that we are now over 5 months into this Conservative Government and the wellbeing of our disabled members and their families is under constant threat from draconian legislation on welfare, social care cuts by local authority, changes to the benefits system and proposed changes to human rights legislation and a referendum to leave the European Union (EU).

The chancellor is holding, at the time of writing this motion, an emergency budget in July. Already we are told that billions have to be cut again from the benefit system. At what further cost to disabled lives?

At last year's conference we sent out a clear message on what would happen if we had a Conservative Government and now we are living with the reality of it all.

The Independent Living Fund has now finished and the money devolved to local authorities with no guarantees that the recipients will receive the money they have been getting (needs clarification). Many local authorities used the fund to get out of making payments for service users with high care needs. For many these social and employment needs will not now be met. We are being told that volunteers will now meet some of our care needs. What effect will this have on our members working in care. People are being encouraged to share their homes with disabled children and adults (Shared Lives in some Local Authorities) for small fees paid to "foster" individuals. Care on the cheap, job loses for our members.

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Human rights legislation and the EU treaties are the primary protection for disabled rights. Where often the court system in the UK fails us when rights are denied, using Human Rights legislation and the European Courts enables us in many cases to win. These victories do not only improve things for the litigant but for every disabled citizen in Europe. We have the right to dignity but some disabled citizens who cannot access toilets independently day or night are being told they cannot have carers for this and can wear incontinence pants and just go and wait to be changed. Is this dignified? By protecting care we are protecting our members jobs.

The proposal is now to radically change the act. What next will they target, the Equality Act?

Therefore conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with the wider union and the Labour Link to make public the effect of benefit reform and how it is destroying disabled lives.
2. Campaign for the Human Rights Act to remain in force as it now stands.
3. Feed into UNISON Campaigning to highlight how the austerity measures are affecting disabled lives.
4. Provide information to our branches on cuts in social care budgets to service users will affect jobs.

Emergency Motion 2 Open University closed to disabled students

Carried

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18. Disabled Students Allowances

Carried as Amended by: 18.1

Conference is concerned about the changes to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) announced the Government are proposing. When these were first announced in April the Ministers for Universities said he was announcing 'measures to minimise DSA' what he actually meant was cuts that will be devastating to disabled members.

DSA isn't just for University Students. It supports college students, student nurses, professional qualifications and Open University course. Disabled Members who are either full time students or undertaking part time courses linked to career progression or development will suffer.

DSA pays for laptops, specialist equipment, support workers and help with travel costs among other things but most of this will change. Providers will be expected to change the way they deliver courses but this won't work. A change that helps one person can make things worse for others. DSA will no longer pay for standard Information Communication Technology (ICT); ICT can be essential to completing the course. Not providing a laptop is like a tax on being disabled. These changes are another barrier to stopping Disabled Members accessing learning and development opportunities and achieving their full potential.

The changes will also have a detrimental impact on our members who work in higher education. They will have to implement the changes and in some cases provide the support disabled students to participate fully in courses without any additional resources. This can only increase the stress and pressure on disabled students, the staff providing the service and already stretched budgets.

Before the election two disabled students fought back. The changes won't affect them but they felt they had to stand up for disabled students who will follow them. They won the right to apply for a Judicial Review. Worried about the results of the election the then Coalition Government announced a further consultation. But now the election is over the reality is they aren't consulting disabled people on these changes just providers and so called experts.

These changes will be devastating if they are implemented but they have been delayed so it is not too late to influence the decision. Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC to:

1. Raise awareness of the effect these changes will have on disabled students including Disabled Members undertaking job related studies;
2. Campaign for the consultation to be extended to include disabled people generally and disabled students in particular; and
3. Lobby Government to reverse the decision before the changes are implemented

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19. Concessionary travel passes.

Carried

Conference notes the benefits that access to public transport, such as buses, trains and coaches, can bring to many disabled people.

Concessionary Passes enable this access but the conditions applicable vary across different nations of the United Kingdom. Also currently, passes issued in one country cannot be used in another.

Conference believes that there would be great benefit in the provision of such passes in a consistent manner and usable anywhere within the United Kingdom.

The current arrangements can disadvantage disabled people who:-

- Have to travel across borders to access medical facilities or treatment, often of a specialised nature
- Live close to one of the borders and work in adjoining country
- Are away from home for work purposes, union work or social occasions.

Conference also recognises that access to appropriate forms of public transport can benefit disabled people:-

- Who are disadvantaged because they are living in rural areas
- Whose ability to travel would have therapeutic effect

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to :-

1. Seek support for these views from Labour Link and other compatible organisations
2. Aim to build public opinion to call for Concessionary Travel Passes, incorporating the best practice of those currently to be available to disabled people and for these passes to be usable across the whole of the United Kingdom.

20. Stop the destruction of passenger transport services

Carried as Amended by: 20.1

Conference, we understand that across the country the slashing of transport services to the public will result in the abandoning of printed timetables, the closure of travel centres, information centres and ticket offices.

The reduction of staffing at public transport terminals is a concern to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender disabled Members, being made vulnerable to homophobic attack – Hate Crime. Due to the increase response times from police support services.

This will significantly disadvantage disabled people as due to their disability not everyone is able to use internet technology to access time-table information and the availability of assistance at stations will also diminish.

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Conference we call on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link and other relevant bodies to campaign to stop the practice of disadvantaging disabled people because UNISON disabled members may rely on these services to get to and from work and maintain an independent life style

21. Privatisation/Outsourcing and the Equality Duty

**Carried
(Amendment 21.1 lost)**

Conference is aware this Government is eroding the public sector by privatisation and outsourcing. The Post Office; East Coast Mainline; a third of recent NHS contracts; and more recently, over half of the Probation Service, all moving into private hands, not only will this lead to poorer service provision, it will also have a negative impact on equality outcomes for staff.

This is because in these newly privatised sectors only the general equality duty will apply. This will mean that employees with protected characteristics, especially disabled people, will now lose out from the safeguards afforded by the specific duties. In addition, they risk losing or having their reasonable adjustments severely diluted under private sector arrangements which could result in a high proportion of disabled workers losing their jobs.

We call on the UNISON's Disabled Members National Committee to lobby the government to ensure that all organisations, whether privatised or not, that are delivering a public service, must comply with the specific duties. This will help ensure disabled people currently in employment with the support of reasonable adjustments can continue in secure employment.

22. Disabled Labour

**Carried
(Amendment 22.1 lost)**

Conference will note the Labour election defeat in May 2015 and the return of a Tory Government. Conference will further note the lack of any policies likely to benefit people with disabilities in the Tory party manifesto or Queens Speech. Moreover, a further round of welfare cuts and reduction of services is proposed.

Conference will further note the Labour Party manifesto for people with disabilities and the work carried out by the Shadow Minister for Disabilities. These are examples of excellent work however they rarely get communicated in the mainstream.

Conference will also note that the Labour organisation Disability Labour was silent during the General Election and failed to organise anything of note if at all. This left members with disabilities with few avenues to get disability issues on the General Election agenda. There is also evidence that members with disabilities have tried to join Disability Labour, or ask questions about its work, but have received no reply. This creates the question - is it functioning at all? Members with disabilities are now wondering who they can turn to get disability issues heard politically and how they can get active within the Labour movement on disability issues.

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Conference therefore calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee working with Labour Link to do the following:

1. Continue to send delegates to National Labour Link Forum and raise motions on disability issues.
2. Make representations to the Labour Party on Disability Labour to see what help can be given to re-energise it.
3. Continue to liaise with the Shadow Minister for Disabilities to get disability issues heard.
4. Encourage members with disabilities who are Labour Party members to raise disability issues with constituency Labour Parties either at meetings or through correspondence.
5. Continue to campaign nationally, regionally and locally on disability issues.

23. Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime and Disabled People

**Carried as Amended: 23.2 & 23.3
(Amendment 23.1 withdrawn, amendment 23.4 lost)**

This Conference is concerned about the high number cases of domestic abuse that some disabled people are facing. The World Health Organisation's 2013 World Report on Disability highlighted abuse as a leading cause of death among disabled people. However, little is known about the true extent to which disabled people experience abuse and whether associated issues such as financial pressures, isolation or stress and anxiety are factors that increase the like of disability related domestic abuse. This also affects Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender couples.

Conference is also concerned that Disability Hate Crime is at the highest level since records began. Disabled people are four times more likely to be violently attacked than non-disabled people. 90% of learning disabled people have been bullied in the last year with 20% reporting they have been attacked at least once a week over the last year. There is no doubt that the anti-scrounger propaganda spouted by the government and sections of the media encourages hostility abuse and violence towards disabled people.

Abuse and hate crime at home, at work, on public transport, on the street and the internet are becoming a daily experience. Many disabled people see this as such a part of everyday life that they go to extraordinary lengths to avoid hostile and violent behaviour that they are limiting their own lives.

So called 'low level' harassment often escalates into more serious crime, including murder. The tendency of agencies, including the police, to see disabled people "as already a victim" can affect the way they deal with disability related crimes. There should not be two tiers of safety and security, one for disabled people and another for everyone else.

Disability related domestic abuse and disability related hate crime are often ignored or hidden away in the mistaken belief that if it is not seen or heard about it cannot be

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happening. But it is happening and we need to take action now to stop this epidemic of intolerance spreading further.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC to:

1. Work with organisations such as Refuge, Women's Aid and Broken Rainbow (a domestic violence charity for the LGBT community) to gather evidence on the levels and causes of disability related domestic violence;
2. Implement a media campaign to raise awareness of and tackle disability related domestic abuse and disability related hate crime; and
3. Issue guidance to Branches and Regions on how to support Disabled Members who have been affected by domestic violence or hate crime.

24. Mitochondrial replacement – friend or foe?

Withdrawn

EM3. Peace, democracy and worker's rights in Turkey

Carried

Conference, we are deeply shocked by the attacks against the peaceful demonstration that was co-organised by trade unions on Saturday 10 October in Ankara. They killed so many people. Hundreds are injured.

Conference we are concerned about the rising violence in Turkey as the government has renewed military action against the PKK and sought to suppress supporters of Kurdish rights including the arrest of elected representatives of the Kurdish people and other minorities. Particularly, at a time when Turkey is seeking entry to the European Union.

Conference notes that state forces have imposed curfews in a number of towns and arrested mayors and MPs who have attempted to enter the towns to speak to their constituents. Many people have been killed and injured in the clashes provoked by these curfews.

Conference further notes that these towns voted overwhelmingly for the opposition HDP in the June general election where the governing party, AKP, lost its overall majority and that it is now being proposed that these towns will not be safe enough to have polling stations in the re-called general election in November and that polling stations for these towns could be re-located several miles away.

Conference believes that this will substantially discriminate against disabled people, women and older people who will be unable to travel to these distant polling stations and will therefore be disenfranchised.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members committee to work with the NEC and the NEC International committee to:

1. Lobby the UK Government to ensure that election observers are present in the affected towns and that the Turkish government understands that putting barriers in the way of disabled people voting is a breach of their human rights and if this occurs Turkey will be condemned internationally.

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2. Raise the concerns with MEP's to consider when they are looking at the entry request of Turkey
3. Write to the Rapporteur for the UN regarding the UN Declaration of Disabled Rights concerning access to polling stations for disabled people
4. Liaise with the TUC to discuss with the trade unions in Turkey about the appropriateness of sending trade union observers as part of the official election observation mission during the election to assist with preventing electoral fraud or intimidation.
5. Link and work with the European Disability Forum and other trade unions over this issue
6. Calls for an independent inquiry into the responsibility for the Ankara bombing