

**UNISON
NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

11-13 FEBRUARY 2016

BRIGHTON CENTRE

FINAL AGENDA

2016 National Women's Conference

UNISON FINAL AGENDA

Organising and Recruitment

1. Engaging Women for the Future of our Union

Conference notes that we are facing ever harsher attacks on our pay, terms and conditions, benefits and living standards. We are expected to do more for less, covering unfilled and deleted posts, while services we rely on disappear and housing costs spiral. As always, women bear the brunt of it.

Under the Tory government, our facility time, our right to take industrial action and even our right to collect subs are all under increasing threat. The Tories aim to leave our members feeling isolated and weaker because of that isolation, by demonising trade unions and trade unionists.

They want us to give up but we are proud to be in UNISON. We know that the only response is for women to get organised. Recruiting new members, improving density and increasing the women's activist base have never been more important.

Conference notes that trade unions play a vital role in improving the employment conditions of women and advancing workplace gender equality. Women in all countries are the largest group of marginalised citizens and workers. We also know that the workplace offers a unique opportunity to improve women's lives and opportunities. Belonging to a trade union increases women's ability to challenge their inequality of opportunity; ending discrimination at work is an essential step in making that a reality. Concerns such as equal pay for work of equal value, sexual harassment, provision of child care and parental leave are increasingly being treated as mainstream trade union issues, as is ending violence against women.

Conference believes UNISON has a good track record in speaking to women. But we need to keep doing more. We must find different ways to approach members and potential members, to get the message out to show them that they are not isolated and that we are still stronger together.

With workplaces increasingly fragmented, we must reach women through community based activities. One example is over the last twelve months, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) members have been staffing stalls at community events across Britain, engaging with existing members, encouraging activism and recruiting new members. Conference reaffirms its belief that "like recruits like", with women recruiters most likely to involve other women.

We must expand our use of the UNISON website, social media and other online tools, such as the UNISON app, Organising Space and Team UNISON – the online skills bank. We recognise that these tools can only be effective if members are signed up to receive updates. And we must all make sure our membership and contact details are kept up to date. Correct membership data is essential to help us beat the challenges from this government and employers on the validity of industrial action ballots and if Tory threats on check off/DOCAS are realised.

Conference welcomes the fact that LGBT women have always been an active and vibrant part of our UNISON women's movement. However conference is concerned that LGBT women are not always as visible as they should be. There is more we can be doing to encourage LGBT women to be involved and heard. We recognise

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that LGBT women will be reached through Black, disabled, young, migrant workers and retired members networks as well as through the LGBT and women's networks.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Further develop and promote tools to assist with women's recruitment and organising objectives;
- 2) Urge women members to make sure their UNISON membership details are kept up to date;
- 3) Encourage increased participation in our women's networks from LGBT women;
- 4) Encourage branches, regions and service groups to involve self-organised, young, retired and migrant workers networks in developing and implementing recruitment and organising strategies aimed at the diversity of women.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender Committee***

2. Encouraging More Women to be Active in UNISON

Austerity has resulted in severe jobs losses within the public sector and the disappearance of many essential services. As women make up a core part of the workforce, and are also the main users of many public services, they have been impacted disproportionately. It is therefore essential that women are at the forefront of fighting against cuts and that UNISON recognises the vital role they play.

Women are often amongst the lowest paid and in the past twenty years the proportion of young women in low-paid roles has trebled. Within these roles it can be difficult to recruit new activists and this can be for many different reasons. Part of the union's organising approach must be to address some of the barriers that are preventing women, particularly low-paid women, from becoming active.

Many of the roles low-paid women workers undertake include working unsociable hours, which may prevent them from attending meetings. In Newcastle City Branch we have a successful women's self-organised group, but on occasions we struggle getting low-paid women to attend meetings and it has been difficult to find a suitable day and time for all to attend. We continue to work with our low-paid women workers to try and address these issues in order to maximise participation, and have held joint women's meetings across the region so we can build on best practice from our colleagues within different sectors.

In the Northern Region women have been at the forefront of leading campaigns, and specific work has been developed to target specific groups of members in order to empower them and ensure their voices are represented. This is particularly important as we face further cuts to services.

This motion asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Encourage regions to work with branches to ensure that work is being undertaken to recruit women as activists;

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- 2) Encourage branches to identify areas where low-paid women work and to try to identify any issues that may prevent them from becoming active;
- 3) Encourage regions to work with branches to support cross-sector geographical women's meetings - highlighting the benefit these can bring; and
- 4) Produce material that actively encourages women, particularly low-paid women, into activity.

Newcastle City

2.1

Add new fifth paragraph:

In Camden (North London) low-paid, outsourced, mainly women school meal workers organised in difficult circumstances to take on private sector firm Caterlink over their poor pay rates, particularly when they were paying the London Living Wage to the workers doing the same jobs in neighbouring Islington. Their campaign started with recruitment so their membership rose quickly to around 120 members with four reps. A noisy pots and pans demonstration at the Town Hall in March 2015 soon led to media exposure of the excessive pay and living standard of the CEO of Caterlink's parent company, which combined with a lively and inventive publicity campaign led to their victory in securing the London Living Wage.

Add new point 3: (and renumber points following): Identify areas where predominantly women work (such as home care, school meals, teaching assistants etc) and encourage branches to look into campaigning over issues such as low pay, poor conditions, zero hours contracts, term-time only work;

Add new point 6: compile and share the best experiences of where predominantly women workers have organised and campaigned to gain improvements at work and how they organised around disparate localities/workplaces, childcare demands and other caring responsibilities.

Camden UNISON (7)

2.2

In paragraph 1, after "disproportionately." Add "The comprehensive spending review has launched a further attack on women's financial stability. As well as further cuts to public sector spending, free childcare will be limited for part-time workers and student nurse grants will be replaced by loans – all of which will primarily affect women workers."

National Women's Committee (8)

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Negotiating and Bargaining

3. Protect Our Employment

Conference recognises that the move by many employers to limiting the use of flexible working arrangements and/ or the introduction of long shifts disproportionately affects women, yet the equality act gives us limited support in tackling these issues, and equality impact assessments are often tick box exercises rather than an effective measure of the issues.

Already increasingly women are finding it more difficult to remain in employment, as they battle with childcare or other caring arrangements, and this will be even more so with the changes to tax credits removing their ability to finance their caring arrangements.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with appropriate bodies including LAOS to:

1) Develop and promote a training package to ensure equality officers, equality representatives and workplace representatives have the necessary skills and knowledge to request and use equality impact assessment data to challenge the direct and indirect discrimination the reduction in flexibility is creating.

2) Offer this training via a variety of methods including but not restricted to, traditional classroom style training, web based training and bespoke branch based training for lay tutors to deliver

***South West Yorkshire
Partnership Health***

4. Flexible working – negative impact on women's hours & caring responsibilities.

There is a definite lack of awareness within the workplace of Employer's Policy and Procedures with regard to Flexible working.

Under provisions set out in the "Children and Families Act 2014", women have a statutory right to ask their employers for a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment to work flexibly providing they have worked for their employer for 26 weeks continuously at the date the application is made.

Flexible working is a way for women workers to change their working hours to suit their needs. For example having the flexibility to change their start and finishing times, compress their weekly hours/ days or even work from home.

This gives women the ability to fit their work life around home life giving greater say over their work life balance.

Even though we have made amazing strides in equality over the years, yet still to this day women take the lion share of caring responsibilities for both children and elderly relatives.

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Women continue to find it increasingly challenging balancing both caring responsibilities and work, putting them under immense stress and strain.

Even though these policies and procedures exist women find it difficult either requesting this or getting a good outcome due to the lack of knowing their rights or because they are concerned about repercussions within the work place.

It is a vital requirement that all women should be aware of their rights both on requesting flexible working and achieving a satisfactory outcome.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to campaign to raise awareness on women's rights to flexible working so that women members can be aided to achieve a happy work life balance and take the guilt out of being a mother, daughter or carer.

Gateshead Local Govt

4.1

Insert final sentence:

'Conference also calls on the National Women's Committee to investigate the impact of a Universal Basic Income policy on women with caring responsibilities, and publish their findings in the National Women's Committee 2017 Annual Report.'

***West Midlands Community Branch
(2)***

4.2

Insert at end of paragraph 8

However, conference recognises that women only have a right to request flexible working and not to actually get it.

Insert at end of paragraph 9

Additionally, conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with Regional Women's Committee's to establish whether women are not only requesting flexible working but are actually getting flexible working patterns

***Lanarkshire Health
(14)***

Campaigning

5. Impact of Austerity on UNISON Women

UNISON is a union of over 1 million women members.

Due to the government's austerity measures over the last 5 years many of these will have seen their standard of living fall and many will be living in poverty.

Researchers show that by moving from a minimum wage to a living wage 4.8 million women nationally could see their income raised by 4 billion pounds according to the Trussell Trust.

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They also say that over a period of the last three years 2012-2015 the number of people attending food banks for emergency support has tripled from 346,992 to 1,084,604. In one year 20,247,047 meals were given to people in poverty and at the same time women were having to decide whether to heat or eat, or to go without in order to feed her children and pay debts.

We call upon the National Women's Committee (NWC) to work with all relevant bodies including UNISON's Labour Link and NEC to renew and increase their efforts in the campaign for Living Wage for low paid workers and a decent pay increase for all workers in line with the cost of living.

We also ask that the NWC work with the board of trustees for UNISON There for You to ensure that all members are aware of the help and support that is available and where needed help with applications.

Furthermore we request the NWC work with UNISON's Labour Link to campaign alongside the Labour Party to tackle the impact of austerity on Women.

Yorkshire & Humberside Region

5.1

Insert final sentence:

'Conference also calls on the National Women's Committee to investigate the impact of a Universal Basic Income policy on women, and publish their findings in the National Women's Committee 2017 Annual Report.'

West Midlands Community Branch (3)

6. Austerity Cut and the Impact on Black Women Workers

Conference we note that overall, 65% of public sector employees are women. The public sector provides flexible working for women and better maternity benefits than the private sector. The Fawcett Society reported that the pay gap between women and men is 13.2% in the public sector and 20.4% in the private sector. People from Black communities are more likely to work in the public sector; 40% of employed Black people, compared to 25% of white people.

Changes to benefits will force more women and children in Black communities into poverty. Women from Black communities are more likely to have larger families and be in lower paid jobs, so will be the most affected by housing benefit caps and caps on the benefits working people can receive, such as tax credits.

Conference notes that overall women contributed £5.8 billion raised by the changes to taxes and benefits since 2010, compared to £2.2 billion paid by men. With cuts to specialist support services and the increasing use of unskilled volunteers in the third sector, people with language barriers, including refugees and migrants, will be less likely to be aware of their rights.

We further note that the number of Black workers in low-paid jobs increased by 12.7% in the last 4 years. The TUC report 'Living on the Margins', shows that over

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the same period the number of white workers employed in low-paying industries increased at a much slower rate of 1.8%. In 2014 nearly 37.6% of Black workers worked in low-paid industries, such as cleaning, care work and catering, compared to 29.6% white employees. The report also reveals that Black workers are twice as likely to be trapped in temporary jobs as white workers.

Conference we know that between 2011 and 2014 the number of Black workers trapped in temporary work has increased by 20%, while for white workers it fell by 8%. The TUC says that Black workers on temporary contracts typically earn £30 a week less than white workers in the same situation and nearly £200 a week less than employees on permanent contracts.

Other key findings from the TUC report include:

a) In 2014 nearly half a million Black workers were underemployed – an increase of 2.4% on 2011. By contrast the number of underemployed white workers fell by 3.4% between 2011 and 2014.

b) Black workers are also more than twice as likely to be in agency work. The number of Black employees doing agency jobs increased by nearly 38% between 2011 and 2014, compared to a 16% rise for white workers.

Campaign groups such as BARAC understand the importance of giving Black communities a voice and linking up the struggles against austerity. Women face the harshest attacks to their living standards and the most vulnerable women in Black communities will be increasingly marginalised by cuts to benefits, education and specialist domestic violence services.

Austerity not only disproportionately affects women, it hits Black women the hardest, adding more layers of structural oppression and racism, to the already multiple layers experienced by the poorest communities.

Conference while it is good that more Black people are getting back into work many have become trapped in low-paid and insecure jobs. For all the talk of a recovery, our economy still isn't creating enough well-paid, permanent jobs to meet demand. The findings in the TUC report show how Black workers have been disproportionately affected by the rise in casual work since the recession.

Conference we call on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link and relevant organisations to:

1. Increase the awareness of the impact of Austerity cuts on women from Black communities and target information at Black women members who have recently arrived in the country to educate them on their Employment Rights
2. Work with the National Black members' Committee to lobby the government and the opposition parties to use the consideration of race equality in public procurement to improve employment levels for Black workers
3. Lobby the government and the opposition parties to take action to address the under-representation of young Black women on apprenticeships and ensure they are able to access the full range of apprenticeships.

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4. Approach the Equality and Human Rights Commission to conduct two sector-based reviews each year to produce an action plan, agreed with employers, for improving performance in ethnic minority recruitment, retention and promotion.

National Black Members' Committee

7. The cuts are killing us

From the rise in domestic violence, to increased homelessness, benefit sanctions which have driven people with long term conditions into desperation and disabled women labelled as scroungers and vulnerable on the streets and in their homes - Austerity is a killing machine.

Job losses and increased poverty leads to violent reactions that impact women and girls most. Cuts to care packages puts more and more pressure on carers - most of whom are women.

Cuts in tax credits are plunging working families - our members - into poverty and having to use food banks.

When local councils are forced to cut budgets to services aimed at supporting the people affected by this - information and advice services, domestic violence services, carers support groups, rape crisis services - they are in fact victimising the victims of austerity and women are at the top of this list.

In effect, Austerity is creating victims then further blames them by taking away the vital support services that women need.

It doesn't have to be like this. Austerity isn't working. The deficit hasn't gone down. Tax avoidance isn't being reclaimed. The Rich get richer and the poor get poorer , the class divide is greater today than it has been since Victorian times.

There is another way. Jeremy Corbyn's victory as leader of the Labour Party has shown that ordinary people - ourselves and our members - want politics to be different. Women raised their voices in this election and showed their desire to fight the cuts. His cabinet is 52% women and in UNISON , where women are the two thirds majority, we need UNISON as our union to be at the forefront of challenging austerity where it impacts on women most.

We need our union to support those workers who are saying enough is enough, across all the sectors our union represents, especially nurses and social workers taking strike action And when it comes to pay, women are saying - we can't take another pay cut.

Conference therefore asks that

- 1) The National Women's Committee work with Women's Regional SOGs and Branch Equality Officers to make contact with local Women's Aid and Rape Crisis services to see how UNISON at a local level can support their campaigns against cuts in funding, and support any fundraising events they are holding;
- 2) That the National Women's Committee explore the possibility of Regional research into how the cuts are affecting women, specifically the level of cuts in

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funding to homelessness temporary accommodation, specialist domestic violence accommodation and outreach services and Rape crisis services, with the results being set against research into levels of presentation and outcomes - including highlighting the number of serious injuries and any deaths.

- 3) The National women's committee work with labour link to continue to lobby MP's and seek to request that DWP release, by region, the number of female deaths within six weeks of being found fit for work and having benefits sanctioned.
- 4) That National women's committee Report the findings of above research within the National women's committee Annual report 2017.

North West Region

8. Tax Credits the best way to tackle in Work Poverty

UNISON can be proud of the campaigning we have done to highlight and tackle the issue of in work poverty. The Worth It campaign took the message out to our communities and women members.

Under the Government's austerity measures it has been women and their families who have borne the brunt of their policies and so called tax reforms. The latest attack is on working families' tax credits and child tax credit. As a result of their proposals, 8 million families will be affected, placing further huge financial burdens on some of the lowest paid women workers, including many of our own women members. Working tax credits and child tax credits are designed to help low-paid workers and low-income families. Millions of women are dependent on both of these tax credits.

Working tax credits were introduced in 2003 by the Labour Government, and replaced similar benefits which had been in place since 1986. The working tax credit helps low paid workers the majority of whom are women. The average yearly payment is approximately £1,960.

Child tax credit is paid in addition to help with the cost of bringing up a family. Child tax credits are not dependent on claimants being in work. The basic child tax credit is £545 a year, but you can get up to £2,780 a child. Changes to this credit will mean that it will only be paid to the first two children in a family, and will apply to children born after 6 April 2017. If a woman stops claiming for more than 6 months, then goes back to earning a low wage, she will only be paid as if she had two children - because it counts as a 'new claim'. The Government is also scrapping an extra 'family element' payment worth £545 for new families after April 2017.

At the moment, any household earning up to £6,420 a year earns the full amount of whatever tax credits they're allowed to claim. People who earn more than that still get tax credits, but they're whittled down as income rises. The threshold is being almost halved to £3,850 a year. The Government's going to start taking away tax credits more quickly too. That means a family on a £5,000-a-year salary will no longer get the full amount.

The Government has announced that from April 2016 it will introduce a higher national minimum wage for over 25s of £7.20 per hour, a Living Wage, and that this

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will make up for the cuts to tax credits. This fails to recognise that tax credits cover both work and children, while the Living Wage will only benefit those in employment.

An independent body, The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), says that 8.4 million households with one paid worker will lose on average £550 a year, even after the boost from the Living Wage. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation single parents will lose £80 a week. Only 25% of low paid women will benefit from the Living Wage. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation warned the damage done by the Chancellor's brutal attack on in-work benefits will far outweigh his rise in the minimum wage. It warned that only 6% of low-income families - those with two parents working full-time on the minimum wage, will see a genuine boost in living standards from the higher rate. It has warned that, "Lone parents, even those working full time, and people who are searching for work face a decade of sharply-declining living standards."

The IFS has stated that in-work benefits, such as working tax credits, are one of the most effective ways to help tackle in work poverty. The Tory policy of increasing the tax-free personal allowance has little impact over a worker's lifetime. The report also found that nine out of ten pay more in tax than they claim in benefits. The IFS stated: "The lifetime poor spend the majority of their working lives in paid work. As a result, policymakers looking to target the lifetime poor might favour doing so through in-work benefits." The IFS found when the Labour Government made tax credits and out-of-work benefits more generous, inequality fell. Over our lifetime, the report found increases in out-of-work and in-work benefits help to share wealth, but increasing the amount of pay we can take home tax-free had almost no impact at all.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Campaign against the cuts to working tax credit and child tax credit that are having devastating impacts for women and our women members;
- 2) Work within UNISON structures to continue to campaign for decent pay for our women members and to work towards ending in work poverty;
- 3) Work to ensure that UNISON's pay strategy incorporates the aspiration of our women members;
- 4) Work with Labour Link to campaign for a fair and just tax system that tackles inequality and supports the most vulnerable.

Northern Region

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8.1

Insert additional action point:

'5) Work with the NEC and the Policy Committee to explore the potential of a Universal Basic Income as a more woman-friendly direction for future welfare policy.

West Midlands Community Branch
(4)

9. Reduction to Tax Credits

Conference applauds the campaign work that UNISON has undertaken on the cuts to tax credits. The vote in parliament September 2015 to impose cruel cuts to the working tax credit and child tax credits and a freeze to these and other benefits such as child benefit, maternity pay, housing benefit to take effect in April 2016 will leave many families in financial chaos. Some families with children are likely to end up in poverty, in debt and in some cases, in danger of losing their home.

One of the big headlines of the Chancellor's July 2015 budget was the increase in the minimum wage rate, renaming it 'living wage'! Much less attention was given to the changes that government were going to make to working tax credits and child tax credits – changes that will plunge millions into desperate situations and poverty. The Institute of Fiscal Studies suggest that the 'National Living Wage' will come nowhere near to compensating for the impact of working tax credit cuts warning that 13million families will lose an average of £240 a year when the cuts come into effect in April.

Last July Yvette Cooper said the prime minister had betrayed hard working parents who in the 21st century should not have to go to food banks to put a hot meal on the table, as too many families have to do and that yet again, women would be hit twice as hard as men. A recent study by the Resolution Foundation think-tank reports that those children affected by the cuts would be predominantly in working households and that poverty would dramatically increase.

The changes will also hit low to middle income families. A family with children on £20,000 could lose nearly £2,000 next April. If they are on £25,000 with two children they could lose as much as £2,300 (depending of family circumstances).

The government has left women and parents feeling further confused by introducing the New Tax Free Childcare (TFC) scheme, which they the government plan to introduce in early 2017. This will mean that some parents will have to choose whether to keep their entitlement to Child Tax Credits or opt into taking up the new Tax Free Childcare Scheme. They will not be able to do both. It has been suggested that 80% of parents will be better off continuing to use Childcare Voucher schemes run by employers, but once the new Tax Free Childcare schemes has been introduced the Childcare Voucher Scheme will be closed to new parents, so they will have no option but to sign up to the new TFC scheme. It basically means that parent will need to pay more towards childcare under the TFC scheme.

UNISON information and campaign to raise awareness, write to MP's and press is excellent but conference is concerned that some people might not be able to face up to the reality of what these drastic cuts mean to them and their families. Some women members in the South East have said that they are not aware of how much

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they might lose next April and are consciously 'sticking their head in the sand' because they can't contemplate the future on a reduced income because they only manage to scrape by now on the current rate.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee work with regional women's committees and national self organised groups and any other relevant UNISON groups, departments and committees to:

- 1) produce a briefing sheet that so that women are aware of the impact of the cuts and freezes to working tax credits and other benefits that disproportionately impact on women
- 2) include in that briefing sheet information about the new tax free childcare scheme, childcare vouchers and how the impact on women and families
- 3) Work with regional women's committees to explore the possibility of running local advice sessions for women members
- 4) Work with regional women's committees to ensure that the information is circulated widely to all regional women's networks and branch women's groups

South East Region

9.1

Amendment to motion 9 reduction to tax credits

Add new point 5) at the end:

5) Keep up the campaign despite the fact that the outcry against cuts in tax credits has forced the government to postpone some of its attacks. The introduction of Universal Credit will still mean reductions in benefit that hit women particularly hard. The lesson is that action works, but that we need more of it.

***Sandwell General UNISON Branch
(6)***

10. Now justice is only for those who can afford it

The British judicial system was based on the bedrock that justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done as well. It should not be a system where justice should be done only to those who are rich enough to afford it.

But in the UK the Government's austerity measures are adversely impacting on women's financial security, and their access to justice. Access to legal redress whether at Employment Tribunal or for Legal Aid in family issues (divorce, custody of children etc), is being made harder to obtain in contravention of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

It has long been understood that domestic violence tends to increase during difficult periods for society, such as recession, and in these austere times with cuts to police and the criminal justice system; cuts to charities working on domestic violence that are funded by local government; and wider cuts to services that provide structural support, we have seen vital support mechanisms either diminish or disappear at a time they are most needed by our women members

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The restrictions that have been made to the Legal Aid Scheme have had a negative impact on women trying to leave abusive relationships. The lack of funding has the potential to put children at risk of harm, and deter women from leaving as her income and assets are assessed (even though she may not have access to those assets and her income may not be sufficient to support her and her children through the leaving process).

Our courts have also seen an increase in 'litigant in person' cases, where the individuals advocate on their own behalf, without legal advice or guidance. This has meant that in some cases, women have faced being cross examined and questioned by the perpetrator of their abuse. In one case recently, a male 'litigant in person' assaulted his wife during the county court proceedings. Other cuts to the criminal justice system also meant that there was no security present in the court to protect the woman from attack.

This conference instructs the national women's committee to

1. Support relevant campaigns for the restoration of Legal Aid for family issues including domestic abuse without the current stringent requirement for proof of domestic abuse;
2. Work with relevant organisations to develop 'how to...' guides to assist women who have no choice but to be 'litigant in person'.
3. Work with relevant organisation to campaign for the repeal of these draconian and unequal laws which rob women of their right to justice

Eastern Region

11. Legal Aid and Redress for Women experiencing Domestic Abuse

Conference will be aware that the changes to legal aid introduced in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, which requires women to provide evidence of their domestic abuse through providing evidence of domestic violence in the previous two years. Evidence can consist of a conviction, police caution, protective injunction, letter from a health professional, residence in a refuge and other categories of information. The evidence has to relate to the last two years and is an arbitrary time limit having serious impacts on those seeking legal redress through the Legal Aid Scheme.

The Justice Select Committee of Parliament has warned that a third of victims of domestic violence cannot provide the evidence required to obtain legal aid, and this has harmed access to justice for some litigants. The Report from the Committee highlighted that women often find it hard to prove they have been abused or attacked. A survey by the Rights of Women organisation found that 39% of women who were victims of domestic violence had none of the forms of evidence required to qualify for legal aid.

The evidence shows that women in crisis are being failed by the present unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that the legislation and the Legal Aid Agency makes them go through. They are being denied the support they so urgently require. In some cases women are being subjected to the horrendous experience of facing

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the courts without legal support, only to be cross-examined directly by their abuser. This is directly due to the cuts to legal aid. Women and their children are being denied the legal justice which is their right. Without legal support, women and their families simply cannot navigate the complex legal processes which have life-changing consequences for them. If they fail to fulfil the evidence requirements women cannot access either advice or assistance under the legal aid scheme.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to campaign:

- 1) For the Legal Aid Agency to have discretion to grant legal aid to a victim of domestic violence who does not fit within the current legislative criteria for legal aid in domestic abuse cases;
- 2) The two year time limit for evidential proof of domestic abuse to be removed from the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, given the lasting impact that domestic abuse can have on the recipient.

Northern Region

12. It needs to stop

Conference welcomes the motions passed on domestic violence and abuse at both women's and National Delegate conferences 2015 and believe they give the union a great platform to campaign and fight for women's rights.

Conference is aware that this work is ongoing for the union and the national women's committee, and calls upon the national women's committee to take account of the additional factors affecting disabled women in this work.

Research into disabled women's experiences has found that the effect of being both disabled and a woman places disabled women at significant and higher risk than women in the general population.

More than 50 per cent of disabled women in the UK may have experienced domestic abuse in their lives, and statistic show that disabled women may be assaulted or raped at a rate that is at least twice that of non-disabled women.

Conference notes that domestic abuse can mean that medication, food and/or money are withheld by the abusive partner and or carer, which can make it even harder for disabled women to get out of controlling relationships.

Conference further notes that another UK study looked at the prevalence and impact of domestic violence against men and women with severe mental illness. The authors found that compared to the general population, this group experienced a substantially increased risk of domestic and sexual violence, as well as higher prevalence of family violence and adverse health impacts following victimisation.

Similarly a UK study of abuse and neglect of older people in 2007 found that the majority of perpetrators of interpersonal abuse in domestic circumstances were men, most of whom were themselves older people. The eldest women were found to be at greatest risk of neglect whilst men over 65 were more likely to experience financial abuse.

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Whilst it is difficult to know the full extent of domestic violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, since statistical data is not yet available in the UK, conference welcomes the Women's Aid survivor's handbook with its specific reference to abuse in LGBT relationships, and Broken Rainbow's work around this issue including their vital helpline.

Conference is appalled at the devastating and significant cuts to adult social services, women's refuges, day centres and other voluntary and statutory services that disabled women use, all of which impacts on the outcomes for disabled women fleeing violence or seeking advice

Conference calls on the national women's committee to work with the national disabled members' committee to:

- 1) Ensure any guidance produced on domestic violence or abuse has a specific section relating to the issues affecting disabled women;
- 2) Highlight the effect of the cuts to branches and urge them to continue to fight against local cuts to services and voluntary organisations;
- 3) Liaise with the local government service group to request that 'The Damage' series includes cuts to women's services, with a focus on domestic violence and abuse.

National Disabled Members Committee

13. The true cost of childcare for Working Women

In the UK approximately 5.5 million working mothers of dependent children pay for child care. With increasing costs of childcare, other household bills and stagnant or reducing salaries, women are finding it harder and harder to stay in work.

In the 2015 budget the government announced an increase of free childcare from 15 hours to 30 hours, but there's a catch! Someone has to pay for the extra hours of childcare and that's the 5.5 million working women. Changes to tax credits and child tax credits means that you will pay after all.

A survey completed in January 2014 of 2,000 mothers found that 67% of those in work and 64% of those not in work said the high cost of childcare is a barrier to taking on more employment. Well over a third (37%) of stay-at-home mothers said they would like to work and would hope to do an average of 23 hours a week. And 20% of mothers who are already employed would like to take on an extra 10 hours a week on average.

According to figures from the Daycare Trust, the average cost of 25 hours' care in a nursery for a child under two costs £103 per week. All children in England, Scotland and Wales qualify for part-time free early education in the term after their third birthday. In England, they receive 570 free hours every year, but even with this help some parents are contributing a substantial part of their income to childcare.

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By the time your child is in school, you will probably need to pay for an after-school club, which costs an average of £40 for 15 hours – enough to ensure that you do not have to pick your children up until six o'clock every night of the week.

Between 2009 and 2014 childcare costs rose on average 27% and this is expected to continue. The government has recently announced that the increase in free hours from 15 to 30 will be delayed until 2017 putting further strain on working mothers.

The cost of childcare is closely linked to the economic viability of working women and those seeking employment. Women in the public sector still have to argue for flexible working following motherhood. For those women who work shifts it is particularly difficult to balance work and family life. Women continue to be the primary care givers in families and society in the UK. There needs to be more support for fathers to share the responsibility for the work/life balance. The reality for many women members is that their choices are limited, and for too many they feel they have no choice or options.

This conference instructs The National Woman's committee to:

- 1) Continue to campaign on all aspects of childcare as a priority for UNISON and its women members including for free childcare delivered in the public sector, flexible working to become a parental right, a right to part-time working, phased return from maternity leave, and extended paid paternity leave;
- 2) Work closely with Labour Link to lobby MPs to cap annual increases of childcare costs.

EDF Energy (Doxford)

13.1

Insert new paragraph 7

For parents of disabled children, the problems are exacerbated. Whilst, under the provisions of the Equality Act, childcarers are not allowed to discriminate against disabled children and must make reasonable adjustments, they are permitted to charge for extra costs incurred. This can make the costs of childcare prohibitive for working parents. Finding carers with suitable skills and experience, and potentially until the child is older than a non-disabled child, creates further barriers to employment and greater hardship for the family.

In bullet point 1, after “public sector” add “additional financial support for the parents/carers of disabled children,”

***National Women's Committee
(9)***

14. Young women deserve respect in the workplace

This Conference believes that sexism in the workplace is still a force to be challenged, and that until it is swept away, women will not achieve equality with men in respect of earnings, status, or power.

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This Conference also believes that young women are not only discriminated against through sexism at work, but also on the grounds of their age.

This Conference further believes that the way in which young women are patronised, harassed, and bullied in the workplace only serves to reinforce stereotypes that young workers are of less worth than older workers. This stereotype is actually enshrined in the National Minimum Wage legislation, which prescribes age-related differentials. This has been compounded by the Government's decision to introduce a further age-related tier of the minimum wage (mis-named the 'living wage' as it is set at a level below the accepted Living Wage rate set by the Living Wage Foundation).

This situation is compounded by the continuing disgrace of women being paid less than their male counterparts.

This constitutes a 'double-whammy' on earnings for young women.

This conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Survey young women members on their experiences of work as regards equal treatment, and publish the results;
- 2) Use the results to consult with the National Young Members Forum on developing a campaign to raise awareness of, and to challenge, the sexism young women face in the workplace;
- 3) Continue with its support for an end to the age discriminatory bandings in the National Minimum Wage, and for the payment of a real Living Wage.

National Young Members' Forum

14.1

At end of 2nd paragraph, after 'age', insert 'sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and ethnicity'.

In 4th paragraph, after 'disgrace of' delete 'women' and replace with 'young Black women, young disabled women, young LGBT women and women generally'.

Insert at the beginning of action point 1) 'Working with the other self-organised groups to extend our reach,'.

In action point 2), insert 'and other discrimination' after 'sexism'.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee **(12)**

15. Maternity Discrimination

This conference notes that key research published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in July 2015, Pregnancy and Maternity Related Discrimination and Disadvantage highlighted ongoing problems for pregnant women in the workplace, for example it discovered of the women surveyed:

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- a) One in 9 mothers were dismissed or made compulsorily redundant whilst others were not.
- b) One in 5 mothers experienced harassment related to pregnancy or flexible working
- c) 10% of mothers were discouraged from attending ante natal appointments by their employers.
- d) One in three felt unsupported by their employer at some point while pregnant or returning to work.
- e) Nearly three in 10 said they were not allowed the flexibility they had requested during pregnancy in term of hours (29%), start times (24%) or additional breaks (28%).

Furthermore the Fawcett Society has expressed concern that the introduction of employment tribunal fees has reduced in particular low paid women's access to justice to challenge maternity discrimination.

Therefore the conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to

- 1) Continue to highlight the rights of women whilst pregnant and on their return to work.
- 2) Work with the NEC to continue UNISON's campaign to end employment tribunal fees in the interest of all women members.
- 3) Work with the NEC to enable women members with potential pregnancy related discrimination cases to achieve easier and speedier access to advice and support.

West Midlands Region

16. Rights of Working Age Disabled Women

Conference believes all disabled women should be supported and enabled to get or maintain gainful employment and career progression.

There are numerous layers that impact upon disabled women when attempting to get or maintain gainful employment.

These include:

- a) Caring responsibilities (children and older relatives);
- b) Accessible support to manage their disability(ies);
- c) Financial constraints (zero hour contracts; gender inequality relating to pay and having to work longer hours and multiple jobs);
- d) Increased propensity to experience mental ill-health due to disability;

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e) Workplace sickness regimes – disproportionately affecting disabled women.

However, the shape of the picture for disabled workers depends on how deeply you look. When it comes to disabled people in the workforce, things like gender and the type of disability have a huge impact.

Conference welcomes the TUC's comprehensive research on disability and employment published in May 2015. This showed that whilst the employment rate for non-disabled people in Great Britain is 79.1 per cent, the employment rate for all disabled people is much lower at 46.4 per cent.

However, conference is particularly concerned that the research reaffirmed the point that people with mental ill health fare among the worst of all disabled people. The employment rate for disabled people whose primary impairment is (what the Labour Force Survey calls) mental illness, phobias or anxieties is an appalling 22.8 per cent – less than half of the already low rate for all disabled people.

Conference calls on the national women's committee to work with the national disabled members' committee, the NEC and Service groups to:

- 1) Promote full compliance by employers with the Public Sector Equality Duty, particularly in relation to reasonable adjustments for disabled women workers
- 2) Work with national employer bodies to urge them to promote the employment of disabled women
- 3) Raise awareness of the Access to Work help available for women with mental health impairments
- 4) Work together to produce and publicise guidance to support disabled women in the workplace regarding accessing training, career progression and reasonable adjustments.

National Disabled Members Committee

17. Removal of Housing Benefit for Young Women

Conference believes that it is a human right for everyone to have access to a safe, secure and affordable home.

Conference also believes that this Tory Government live in some alternative idyllic world where all young people live with their parents until they move onto university, before getting a job and moving into their own home, whilst always having the security of their family home in times of crisis.

Conference knows that this Tory utopia couldn't be further from the truth from many of our young women whose lives can be challenging and chaotic. This is why conference condemns the Tory Governments budget decision to abolish housing benefit for young people between the ages of 18 and 21 as it will put vulnerable women at further risk whilst making more young women vulnerable.

Conference notes that the Government are using the austerity agenda to drive ideological cuts to the welfare bill and public services, alongside the unnecessary

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housing crisis to punish young women. The reduction in the supply of housing alongside rising costs of rent and stagnant wages will force young women into homelessness.

Young women may be escaping abuse at home, be thrown out of their family home, be care leavers or migrants. Many families are now unable to maintain a spare room for use in a crisis since the implementation of the infamous Bedroom Tax. This is a far cry for the Tory vision of young people's lives.

Conference notes that homelessness is dangerous for all people but believes it impacts disproportionately on young women as women are more likely to be at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, fleeing one abusive relationship into another. Young women forced into mixed sex, shared accommodation, not just shared communal areas but in some cases, shared rooms. There has also been evidence of men advertising for "desperate young girls" in need of accommodation, offering them a bed in return for sex.

Conference is concerned that the removal of this vital safety net for 18 to 21 year olds will push more and more young women into homelessness and into the arms of abusers at the same time as the public services meant to protect and support these young women are being decimated by this Tory Government.

Conference, therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Condemn this vile Tory policy as an attack on the safety and independence of our young women
- 2) Work with UNISON's Labour Link and Young Members to enable young women's voices be heard when campaigning and lobbying against this policy
- 3) Support and promote the work of UNISON's There for You and the role of the Branch Welfare Officer in supporting members through these difficult times
- 4) Work with UNISON's Young Members to look at putting campaigning materials together

Newcastle Hospitals Unison Branch

18. Black women and cervical cancer

Cervical cancer remains the most common cancer in women under the age of 35 and yet cervical cancer screening can prevent up to 80% of cases of the disease.

- a) Up to 3000 women are diagnosed per year
- b) Up to 1000 women die per year despite screening
- c) Biggest risk: non-attendance of screening programme

These are the symptoms of cervical cancer:

- i) irregular bleeding

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ii) unusual discharge

iii) pelvic pain

iv) bleeding after sex

Conference, the rates of cervical cancer for Black women needs to be addressed. In a community-based survey of 876 Black women who presented to hair salons in London were asked about their knowledge of cervical cancer and reasons for non attendance at screening sessions. Their study found that women were more likely to be overdue screening if they were:

1) Younger

2) Single

3) African (26% compared with 18% of Caribbean women)

Further a 2009 National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN) report suggests that there are higher rates of cervical cancer in Black and Asian females aged 65 years and over, compared with White females.

A study by health think-tank Demos revealed 23 per cent of Black women admitted they had never attended a screening appointment – compared to 14 per cent of white British women. In a study of South Asian women, a third of those who had been born overseas had never been screened.

Similar to other studies with Black women they found an association between knowledge and screening behaviour which could suggest interventions designed to increase awareness might consequently have a positive influence on behaviour.

For example, cervical screening conducted over five years covering the target age group (of 25-64) by the Primary Care Organisation in England, 31st March 2013 found the following:

Age-standardised rates for White females with cervical cancer range from 8.2 to 8.7 per 100,000. Rates for African and Caribbean females are similar, ranging from 6.3 to 11.2 per 100,000, whereas the rates for Asian females are significantly lower, ranging from 3.6 to 6.5 per 100,000.

Cervical screening is not a test for cancer but is a method of preventing cancer by detecting and treating early abnormalities which can prevent the disease before it gets started." A 100 per cent screening rate would almost halve the number of women facing cervical cancer and also save 1,176 lives over a five-year period.

It is important to dispel the myths and fear surrounding screening to encourage more women to attend. It is also vital that women are able to access services at times that are convenient for them – this may mean the provision of cervical screening at clinics with extended opening hours at evening and weekends.

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Doctors have long thought that less access to screening and follow-up health care were the reasons Black women are 40 per cent more likely to develop cervical cancer and twice as likely to die from it.

Conference, health information is crucial for people to be able to understand risks and symptoms, to make informed life choices, to navigate the services and information available and to act on advice. Most of the information provided by the NHS is in text format and in English. This can be a barrier not just for Black women who may have low or no literacy in written English but also for those with low educational attainment, learning difficulties or disabilities, those with British Sign Language as a first language and people with sight problems. As a result of this lack of information and support in a format suitable to them a further survey found that Black cancer patients were less likely to understand their diagnosis and treatment options.

We are concerned that amongst Black women there is a lower cancer screening services uptake, lower level of awareness of causes, signs and symptoms of cervical cancer. We would therefore like to see publications in a range of languages, incorporating more Black imagery in health promotion material, contributing to Ethnic Minority Cancer Awareness Week and general Black community engagement.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to work with the NEC to:

1.1 Work with relevant organisations and the National Black members to promote materials highlighting the symptoms of cervical cancer and incidences amongst Black women

1.2 Include information on cervical cancer in the women's health pack

1.3 Work with the health service group on seeking to influence Clinical Commissioning Groups and Public Health England to raise awareness and encourage more Black women to attend screening

1.4 Work with organisations such as the National Cancer Action Team (NCAT) to signpost members to information in different community languages

National Black Members' Committee

19. Online Safety for Women

Conference recognises that the use of progressive, interactive and widespread social media sites can be very beneficial both in a work or a personal context. However, are we being less concerned about our rights to privacy when using these sites? The whole idea of social networking is to be involved, connected and in touch with friends and colleagues, and individuals are encouraged to post photos, statuses, where they are, where they've been and who they are with. Social media sites work purely on sharing information with others and being less private about our lives.

Conference acknowledges that social media in our society is widely used but are women members fully aware of the risks of posting for example where they work, live

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or that they are on holiday? There are widespread concerns regarding members posting where they work on their public profiles and the impact on their job, especially if dealing with vulnerable individuals. There has also been an increase in social media references within disciplinarys in the workplace across the UK. It is also widely known that employers do look at profiles on social media at the point of appointing to a post.

Conference believes that social media sites do not emphasise the risks posed to women when updating their profiles and that individuals could put themselves at risk without even knowing or considering it. Profiles can provide enough information for someone to become a potential victim of stalking by others who trawl social media sites for these women. The software and applications enable stalkers to track victims through their daily lives and could strike at any time, whether this would be physically, emotionally, financially or other means.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Create an Online Safety guide for women to be used in Regional Groups and branches highlighting do's and don'ts for women around social media sites.
- 2) Campaign for social media sites to be more aware of the issue of cyber stalking and how to report it
- 3) Encourage Branch activists to negotiate a robust and effective Social Media Policy within workplaces.
- 4) Promote education provision for women members around their own online safety.

Cymru/Wales Region

20. Save our newborns

Conference notes that Group B Strep is a potentially fatal infection for newborn babies. In fact, it is recorded as the biggest killer of newborns and that it colonises in the vagina of 22% of all women.

Because the women are carriers rather than being infected by the bacteria there are no symptoms therefore this is not detected. However during birth the baby comes into contact with the bacteria and can be infected resulting in potentially fatal septicaemia or even meningitis.

There is currently no routine testing for Group B Strep during pregnancy within the NHS despite a simple culture test being available, though we note that this is available in some NHS trusts, depending on where you live.

If it is known that the expectant mother is a carrier of Group B Strep simple precautions can be taken that reduce the mortality rate.

Conference therefore calls on National Women's Committee to:

- a) Raise awareness by producing an advisory leaflet for inclusion in the Women's Health Pack

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- b) To work with the appropriate bodies including Labour Link to lobby the Department of Health and the UK National Screening Committee for Group B Strep testing to be a routine procedure within the NHS for all pregnant women between 35 and 37 weeks gestation.

Yorkshire & Humberside Region

20.1

In action point (b) add “and Group B Strep Support” after “Labour Link”.

In action point (b) delete “Group B strep testing” and substitute “testing for group B Strep carriage”.

National Women's Committee (10)

21. Women and Workplace Dress Codes

Conference notes that many women workers do not wish to dress in accordance with gendered stereotypes of what is 'appropriate women's dress'. Yet some employers continue to have dress codes with a number of gender-specific requirements.

Conference believes that arguments that some forms of gender expression are unprofessional, or societal norms dictate that certain items be restricted to only one gender, have been used for too long to shield bigots from criticism, pander to sexism and entrench specific conceptions of gender which have no place in a modern, progressive society.

Conference further believes that employers should only have dress codes that serve a legitimate purpose, such as maintaining a desired image with customers and clients, or aiding staff visibility, and this can be attained without gender-specific dress requirements.

Conference notes that while all workers are affected by these policies, some women and many non-binary workers find it difficult or impossible to follow a gendered dress code and be true to their own identity. Further, for trans women who are at the beginning of, or are considering social gender transition, the anxiety which often occurs around expressing your gender in a new way in the workplace, is compounded by the fear of being disciplined by management.

Conference believes that in uniformed workplaces with different versions of uniform available, staff should be able to choose from what has been historically defined as the 'male' or 'female' items without the need to explain why, in the same manner that a change in size is requested.

This would have benefits for many workers, including many women, those going through a formalised process of transition and those who have a gender expression that does not fit binary assumptions or stereotypes.

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Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee and other bodies in the union as appropriate to produce a best practice guide for branches on gender-neutral dress and uniform policy.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender Committee***

22. Women's rights are human rights

Conference, the recent decision by Amnesty International to work towards full decriminalisation of the sex trade has disappointed women's groups across the world. As the world's most prominent human rights organisation we would not expect Amnesty International to prioritise the rights of pimps and punters over the rights of women, girls and some men to be free from a life of selling sex.

UNISON has already set policy on prostitution at both National Women's Conference and National Delegates Conference. We have taken the stance that prostitution is a form of violence against women and support the idea of tackling demand through adopting a Nordic style law that decriminalised the sale of sex and criminalises the buyers and pimps while funding exit strategies. In countries where this has been implemented, it has been proved to be successful in reducing the demand for prostitution and changing public attitudes towards the sex trade.

Contrary to this, Germany and New Zealand that have fully decriminalised or legalised prostitution activity and as such has seen an increase in trafficking, organised crime and inflation of both the legal and illegal trade, with no tangible evidence that women are safer.

The approach to consultation that Amnesty has taken on this proposal has been questionable. Not all members and branches were given a timely opportunity to respond. As an affiliated organisation, conference believes that UNISON should be given the opportunity to challenge the proposed policy and work with women's rights organisations to stop the policy being adopted.

We are calling on the national women's committee to;

- 1) Lobby Amnesty International and make clear our views that full decriminalisation of the sex industry and its profiteers is not in line with our policy of prostitution as it is an infringement on women's rights .
- 2) Lobby Labour Link and MPs to revitalise the campaign for the Nordic Model
- 3) Work with the 'End Demand' campaign to implement a Sex Buyer law, and to raise awareness through regional and branch networks.

South East Region

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23. Creating an Agenda on Equality and Human Rights

The 2015 UNISON NDC carried motion 85 (submitted by the NI region) on resetting the equality agenda. It is our firm belief that equality and human rights are inherently interlinked. Women's rights are disproportionately affected by discrimination on all grounds. Consequently, women's rights and women's protection from discrimination should be an overarching priority in the organising, bargaining, public policy and campaigning programmes developed by UNISON to challenge employers, public bodies and Governments.

To give effect to motion 85 UNISON women's committees across regions and nations, in co-ordination with the national Women's Committee, must ensure that all these work programmes operate within a clear gender equality and human rights strategy. For example, our bargaining campaigns should pay special attention to the rights of low paid women workers and to equal pay. Our campaigns for a living wage and against casualization and zero hours contracts must have clear impact assessments on women. Our campaigns against privatisation and outsourcing must have similar impact assessments and strategies to confront them.

On all public policy matters such as health, education, housing and the welfare system, we need to highlight and challenge discrimination against women and the impact on their human rights.

We therefore call on the National Women's Committee to work with all UNISON women's committees and the UNISON centre to move the issue of equality and women's rights from silo to centre stage in all aspects of UNISON policy making and implementation. As a first step, major research should be undertaken on the current levels of gender discrimination being experienced by women and UNISON members in particular at home, at work, and in wider society.

UNISON Northern Ireland

24. Equality, Power and Devolution

Conference notes that across the UK women remain massively underrepresented in the political and decision making processes that influence our lives, especially working class women.

Conference further notes that women currently make up:

- a) 29% of MP's in the UK Central Government
- b) 40% of Welsh Assembly members
- c) 35% of Scottish Parliament members
- d) 19% of Northern Ireland Assembly members
- e) 25% of the House of Lords
- f) 32% of local authority councillors

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- g) 32% of Cabinet posts
- h) 13% of elected Mayors
- i) 17% of Council Leaders
- j) 1 in 7 of elected Police and Crime Commissioners are women
- k) 32% of UK MEP's

Conference believes that whilst the General Election 2015 made some gains for women, these figures remain woefully inadequate in ensuring women's voices are heard at all levels within our political landscape.

Conference also believes that the current devolution agenda will impact heavily on women's equality as local politics remain heavily dominated by older, white men. In May 2015 three quarters of local authority councillors were male, 96% white and had an average age of 58 with over a quarter aged over 65.

Conference is concerned that the establishment of combined authorities will see more and more power devolved into the hands of men with little or no accountability to the wider electorate. Local authorities have a huge amount of power and provide many of the services women rely on. Local authority spending equates to a quarter of all public spending at over £100 billion. With more and more powers promised via devolution women are missing out on influencing these decisions. This is of huge importance when considering the ongoing cuts to local government spending has a hugely disproportionate impact on women, undermining access to key services such as childcare, social care and special services for victims of violence against women.

Conference also raises concerns with the current boundary review which could see the number of MP's reduced from 650 to 600 and believes this loss of seats will impact negatively on the amount of women in Parliament.

Conference believes that trade unions are best placed to support and promote working class women's voices being heard in the corridors of power.

Conference, therefore, calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link and regions to provide women only training on Women and Politics to encourage and support UNISON women to participate in the political processes and to stand for election at all levels of the political spectrum
- 2) Reaffirm its support for All Women Shortlists extending this to local government as well as national government
- 3) Continue to support and widely promote the 50:50 Parliament campaign extending this to local government and all political elections
- 4) Support 50:50 cabinet structure within local and national government
- 5) Continue lobbying for an end to "All Male Platforms"

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6) Work regionally in identifying and prioritising issues within the devolution process and promote the voices of women as major stakeholders in shaping the future of local as well as national democracy

7) Call for an equality impact assessment of the proposed boundary review

Newcastle Hospitals Unison Branch

24.1

Action point 6 – after ‘national democracy’ insert ‘considering the model adopted in Wales of the Women Making a Difference project which promotes leadership for women in all levels of Government.’

Action point 7 – after ‘proposed boundary review’ insert ‘and reorganisation of local authorities in the devolved nations’

***Cymru/Wales Region
(1)***

25. Women's Voice in Local Politics

Women are under-represented in politics. The lack of women in Westminster is increasingly reported but the lack of women in local government is very often overlooked.

According to the Fawcett Society women make up only 32% of local councillors in England and 24% in Northern Ireland. Only 12.3% of local authority leaders in England are women (2014), compared to 16.6% in 2004 and only 13% of elected mayors are women.

The Fawcett society argue there has been very little improvement in the level of women councillors in the last 10 years with the numbers having dropped in Scotland and Wales and the number of women leaders dropping by 5% over the same period.

There are many hurdles women face when standing for local election:

a) Combining work, caring responsibilities and running a campaign for an election is very difficult to juggle,

b) Councillors are often paid little (or not at all) so, unless they are retired or independently wealthy, they must also have a job. Those trying to combine caring responsibilities with a job will struggle to take on time-consuming roles in local politics.

c) Local council meetings are often held at awkward times, are unlikely to provide childcare expenses or offer flexible working

d) Women councillors are often pigeon-holed into traditionally female portfolios such as Children's or Adult social care and are rarely in the cabinet where spending decisions are made.

Local councillors should have access to the same employment law and practice requirements as the rest of the public sector. Councillors shouldn't be treated as self-

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employed and be exempt from employment regulation such as formalised maternity rights.

Council meetings should be run to allow engagement of all its councillors and innovative ways such as attending meetings online should be used to help people with caring responsibilities and/or jobs to attend.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to

- 1) Work with Labour Link to look at how we encourage women to become involved in politics at local level.
- 2) Develop a mentoring scheme where women with experience of being councillors can mentor those who are interested in standing for election.
- 3) Work, in partnership with Labour Link, to recognise employment regulation such as formalised maternity rights for councillors.

West Midlands Region

26. Women's access to justice

Conference notes with concern the impact that successive government policies are having on women's access to justice.

For those women experiencing domestic violence, access to justice means:

- a) receiving a timely, safe and understanding response to domestic violence from the police;
- b) ensuring that civil remedies, such as injunctions, are used appropriately and are offered alongside other safety measures;
- c) a court system that understands the needs of survivors of domestic violence and takes these crimes seriously; and
- d) having access to a criminal justice system with legislative measures that fully recognise the damaging and dangerous nature of domestic violence and prioritises the needs of victims – the vast majority of whom are women.

Cuts to public services, including police and probation services, mean that these measures are simply not in place, with specialist services to support the victims of violence being among the first to go, or to be tendered out to organisations who do not recognise the importance of by-women, for women provision.

In the probation service, the majority of domestic violence cases have been and will continue to be assessed as medium risk, meaning that they will be supervised by Community Rehabilitation companies - profit making organisations, where cutting costs is the primary objective. Ensuring protection for victims and interventions for perpetrators is not something that can successfully happen within an austerity framework. This impacts not only on women who may themselves be the victims of domestic abuse, but also on the staff – our members - who previously provided the services.

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Conference further notes that in April 2013 changes to the Legal Aid system came into effect, through the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offender Act 2012, which meant that legal aid was no longer available for the majority of family law cases. Research conducted by Women's Aid, Rights of Women and Welsh Women's Aid showed that the impact of these changes is devastating for women seeking access to justice:

- 1) 50% of women do not have any of the prescribed forms of evidence in order to apply for legal aid in family law cases.
- 2) 60% of women take no further action if they are not eligible for legal aid.
- 3) Over 30% of women report finding it very difficult to find a Legal Aid solicitor.

In the workplace, the introduction of employment tribunal fees has led to a significant decline in the number of claims – most markedly in the number of sex discrimination claims, which fell by 83% in the year following the introduction of tribunal fees. Moreover, while the introduction of fees has coincided with a decline in claims, there has not been a marked change in rates of success, indicating that some claims that would have been successful are now not being pursued. Conference applauds UNISON's ongoing battle to challenge the government on this issue.

The latest attack on women's access to justice is the introduction of the April 2015 'criminal courts charge', which will be imposed on top of fines, prosecution costs and other charges, regardless of the seriousness of the offence or the ability of the convicted party to pay. The charge is increased if the case is heard at trial – encouraging women to plead guilty to keep costs down. The costs will be covered by attachment to earnings or benefits if the individual is unable to pay outright, meaning that low paid women, with no savings or alternative means of assistance will be disproportionately affected, as will their children.

Further, conference is aware that abuse, marginalisation and poverty are at the root of much of women's offending, and that traditionally women are sentenced more harshly than men for similar offences. Key to preventing re-offending is access to effective support services. Research and experience show that women respond better to gender-specific solutions that offer a holistic approach, and thus improve self-esteem, well-being and their ability to take control of their lives. Adequate funding is essential to put this in place.

Conference believes that these cuts and punitive measures are a despicable attack on the most vulnerable in society, and a direct attack on women's access to justice.

Conference therefore calls on the national women's committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link, the Police and Justice Service Group and appropriate partner organisations to campaign for a fairer justice system, which is properly funded and meets the needs of women.

National Women's Committee

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27. Appropriate Funding for Women's Self Organisation

Conference notes with concern that constraints on branch finances are leading to some women not being encouraged or able to participate in women's self-organised group activities.

Conference notes with concern that financial constraints and controls at branch and regional level may be negatively impinging on women's activism and as a consequence reducing the opportunities to grow new women activists and to encourage women activists to increase their involvement.

Conference instructs the National Women's committee to work with all relevant UNISON bodies (including regional women's groups) to;

- 1) Carry out an audit of attendances at women's events and training in UNISON
- 2) Raise this issue of concern with Regional Convenors
- 3) Campaign to ensure that appropriate funding is available to support women's self organisation to develop to its full potential in branches, regionally and nationally.

Eastern Region

27.1

Insert after "national women's committee" in paragraph 3:

"work with the NEC in order to investigate the claims that financial constraints are limiting participation in women's self organisation and attendance at national women's conference, and "

***National Women's Committee
(11)***

28. Rape Crisis in Crisis

Conference notes with growing concern the funding crisis within services that support women who have experienced rape and sexual violence.

In August 2015 it was reported that nationally none of the 46 Rape crisis organisations in England and Wales had secure funding beyond March 2016 despite a 50% increase in the number of survivors receiving ongoing support which had grown to 50,000 a year with calls to helplines soaring to 164,000 equating to an average of 3,000 calls a week.

There is a massive increase in demand for services and with the Goddard enquiry which will look into historical cases of childhood sexual abuse, this is something we expect to see increase in the coming years.

In October 2015, The Big Lottery Women and girls fund, able to sustain organisations for between 3 and five years was oversubscribed to the tune of £238 million as against the £35 million distribution sum, demonstrating the high level of need for such service provision. And despite clear evidence of increasing need to

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support existing survivors and new, both of the Greater Manchester services were denied funding.

This has done nothing to improve the figure of 1,600 people on the waiting lists of 17 charities with up to 10,000 survivors waiting for more than a year to be counselled across the 135 specialist services facts which were mentioned in the Guardian recently.

It is of police record that there has been a rise in child sexual abuse incidents from 66,120 in 2012 to a projected 113,291 cases in 2015, demonstrating a potential 71% increase, over the last three years with non recent cases rising by 165%.

In 2014 Ministry of Justice 'Victims funding' was transferred to Independent Police Crime Commissioner (office) , since that decision there has been less funding to services which support women across the board. Rape Crisis England and Wales in responding to the growing concern of funding for specialist services state that their member organisations are seeing "unprecedented levels of demand for their specialist services".

It is vital that the full range of support services to women and girls who have been raped and sexually abused are fully considered a sentiment felt not only by UNISON women's committees , pressure groups and survivors but also many Charity leaders including Gabrielle Shaw, the Chief Executive of the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC), urging the government to commit more funding to the struggling charities, warning that services will close and victims will suffer if they do not receive urgent help.

Historically there has been reluctance for women to report rape and sexual attacks and convictions are proportionately low. The consequence of failure to fund support services adequately would impact severely on those already reticent to come forward to ensure perpetrators are punished accordingly. Pernicious austerity measures that are causing reductions in funding to vital services should not be allowed to endanger women further.

UNISON has a strong track record of support to Rape crisis Centres,

Conference therefore asks that the National Women's committee works with all relevant sections within UNISON including Labour Link to

- 1) Encourage regional and branch women's groups to Raise awareness of the funding crisis that Rape crisis centres are facing
- 2) Campaign for central Government funding for Rape crisis specialist services – as set out in the Conservative Manifesto
- 3) Identify their local Rape Crisis service and consider forging links to better support them in their fight for funding
- 4) Report back to National Women's conference in 2017 with progress and success

North West Region

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29. Women, the refugee crisis and trafficking

Conference notes that Refugees from Syria's civil war, which is in its fifth year, has killed around 250,000 people, forced 3.98 million to flee the country, and internally displaced around 7.6 million people.

The prospect of a better life in Europe has driven many to make the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean. Thousands have died en route. Their misery, which makes them easy prey for people smugglers, is part of a global phenomenon that produces almost \$26bn a year.

Charging an average of around \$3,000 a person to reach Europe, the criminal gangs and the industry as a whole are flourishing.

Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia have all been affected. Among the displaced, women and children remain the most vulnerable. Never ending uncertainty, lack of privacy, lack of educational resources, violence, abject hunger and poverty, the threat of being trafficked into slavery are everyday realities faced by many.

Save the Children warn "Unaccompanied children are at the greatest risk from people traffickers, some are being forced into manual labour, domestic work, drug smuggling and prostitution."

Conference notes that there are up to 27 million people living in conditions of slavery, in forced labour or sexual exploitation around the globe today. The UNODC (United Nations office of Drugs and Crime) reports that global demand for prostitution and forced labor generates 32 billion dollars annually.

Trafficking women and children specifically for sexual exploitation is a high-profit and low risk endeavour for traffickers and the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. Despite the fact international law and the laws of 134 countries criminalise sex trafficking, human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking. Nearly 100 000 people are trafficked across international borders every year of which more than 70% are women and half are children. Every 30 seconds, a child is trafficked, and the practice is often heightened in the wake of conflict or natural disaster.

The UK is a significant destination country for women, children and men to be trafficked. Women and girls make up 98% of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. One woman can earn a trafficker between £26,000 and £52,000 per year from one victim. Furthermore, 11% of British business leaders polled through YouGov admitted that it was 'likely' modern slavery was playing a part in their supply chain. Britain has averaged one supply chain crisis per year in the last three years.

All Sex trafficking violates basic human rights, including the rights to bodily integrity, equality, dignity, health, security, and freedom from violence and torture. Key international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), consider sex trafficking a form of sex discrimination and a human rights violation.

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The National Women's Conference calls on the National women's committee to:

- 1) Consider how to support the International World Day against trafficking in human persons on 30 July
- 2) Forge closer links with UNISON's international department in order to improve engagement with international campaigns and solidarity initiatives and to help raise awareness of the key issues in those countries identified as priority for UNISON.
- 3) Circulate via email to regional groups UNISON's International Days' Resource calendar that supports international women and girls initiatives amongst other organising initiatives
- 4) Encourage regions and branches to affiliate to those organisations that are a priority for UNISON.
- 5) Continue to work with those organisations that cross borders in their quest to eliminate violence against women, such as the Fawcett society, CEDAW, Amnesty International, and encourage regions and branches to affiliate where appropriate

South West Region

30. The refugee crisis

The government's Immigration Bill is a draconian piece of legislation designed to criminalise and stigmatise immigrants and undocumented people. It is part of a wider, ongoing Government attempt to appear tough on immigration to an increasingly sceptical public.

While millions of people were moved after seeing the washed up body of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, the forces of reaction still remain – as angry and hostile as ever. Violent elements are feeling emboldened. European countries are putting up their borders while the EU is establishing a new border force to expedite deportations and force/bribe middle-eastern and north African countries to establish huge refugee camps in their own countries.

Meanwhile the right wing media in the UK continue to focus on images of apparently healthy, fit young men fighting to board trains and smuggle themselves across the border from France – feeding the myth that migrants are primarily economic and seeing to take advantage of the UK welfare system.

However, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reports that women and girls comprise about half of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless population.

Further, women are at greater risk of harm, due to traditional gender roles and women's position in society, including the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Unaccompanied women and girls, women heads of households and pregnant, disabled or older women face particular challenges.

It is essential, therefore, that shelters are safe for women; that they offer privacy; that food distribution systems should take family roles into account and ensure it reaches all; that sanitation facilities should be accessible and separated for men and women

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and that women should be able to collect water and fuel without risking rape or other abuse.

In the UK, government proposals as part of their crackdown on immigrant workers hold yet more perils for women seeking refuge, including the possibility of undocumented workers receiving a 12 month prison sentence – potentially separating women from their children and making them even more vulnerable to exploitative employers.

Further, the withdrawal of financial support to 'failed' asylum seeker families will leave families and children homeless and with no means of support or ability to feed themselves or to earn money. This is despite the poor quality of Home Office decision making, highlighted by UNISON and others. In just six months between 2014/15 in over 50% of cases on which the Asylum Tribunal made a decision, the case was either allowed or remitted. That women and children will suffer if this Bill is passed is beyond doubt.

Meanwhile proposals to restrict access to NHS care for migrant workers are in the process of being implemented. This creates huge potential for discrimination against the UK's Black communities, and particularly women who may already struggle to access care because of cultural and language barriers.

Conference believes that despite the many challenges, with the appropriate support, refugee women can improve their lives and the lives of their children, families and communities.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to work with the NEC, regional women's committees and all appropriate bodies in UNISON to:

- 1) strengthen our work advocating for evidence based, human rights centred policies around migration, which take account of the specific needs of women migrants and refugees;
- 2) continue to challenge racist immigration policies and to support a wide range of anti-racist organisations at local and national level;
- 3) lobby the UK government to use their influence to ensure that where refugee camps are in place, the safety and dignity of women is assured.

National Women's Committee

30.1

Amendment to motion 30 The refugee crisis

Add after "Conference believes that despite the many challenges, with the appropriate support, refugee women can improve their lives and the lives of their children, families and communities".

However, the British government's decision to bomb Syria will worsen the refugee crisis, increase the Islamophobia that many refugees face, and solve none of the problems that refugees face.

Add new point 4) at the end

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4) continue to support actively the anti-racist march that takes place on UN anti-racism day—19 March in 2016.

***Sandwell General UNISON Branch
(5)***

31. What's Europe ever done for us?

The government has announced that, by the end of 2017, they will conduct a referendum on whether the UK should remain within the EU.

Conference acknowledges that years of recession, soaring unemployment, and lacklustre leadership have left the public with little faith in the EU and its ability to improve the lives of ordinary working women. In addition the imposition of austerity policies on EU member states, most notably in Greece despite the wishes of that country's democratically elected government elected on an anti-austerity platform, has strengthened the perception of the EU as being remote, unaccountable and undemocratic.

Further, the UK media have done much to damage the reputation of the EU and its workings, by mocking the institution, mis-reporting and exaggerating the impact of legislative change.

Nevertheless in the 1990s the European Union introduced significant social and employment policies that gave new rights to European workers and acted as a counterweight to the liberalising policies of the EU's internal market.

Conference therefore believes that it is in our members' interests to have a balanced picture of the impact of EU membership on our legislation, and to be aware of more positive actions, such as:

- 1) Whilst there is still far to go, tens of thousands of women in the UK have seen fairer pay as a result of EU legislation on equal pay;
- 2) Maternity and parental rights have been enshrined for workers across Europe;
- 3) Women workers are over-represented in the vulnerable workforce – EU law provides protection for all workers, whether full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in house or agency;
- 4) Health and safety legislation includes protection from dangerous machinery and chemicals used primarily by women in catering and cleaning – previously ignored in comparison to more obviously dangerous industries such as construction.
- 5) Women experience multiple discrimination in their everyday lives – EU law provides protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, race, sexual orientation and disability.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to work with the NEC, international committee and other relevant bodies to:

- 6) raise awareness of the impact of EU legislation on our members' lives and its contribution to equality and women's rights;

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7) produce a simply What's Europe Ever Done for Us infographic, to raise awareness of the impact of EU legislation on UK women's rights and lives.

8) ensure that the debate around the UK's membership doesn't solely focus on the 'business case' but reflects the role that EU social, employment and equality legislation still plays in protecting working women.

National Women's Committee

31.1

In numbered point 5, add 'gender reassignment, religion or belief,' after 'gender'.

After numbered point 5) insert new paragraph:

Indeed conference notes that some UK equality law was only introduced because of EU directives. For example the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, the precursor to the 2010 Equality Act, only came into force at the last possible date to comply with EU law. Prior to that it was lawful to sack a worker simply because of their sexual orientation. Conference believes we must not let apathy allow any erosion of our hard fought rights. We must exercise our right to influence and shape future policy including by engaging with the MEPs that we elected to represent us.

In numbered point 6), after 'equality' insert 'including LGBT, disability and race equality'.

In numbered point 8), after 'employment' insert 'health and safety'

Add additional numbered points at end:

9) Liaise with the other self-organised group committees and young members forum in meaningful dialogue around joint campaigns to prevent further erosion of our hard won equality legislation and other protections;

10) Encourage regions to run training on how to engage with your MEP.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

(13)

32. Pro women pro choice

Conference welcomes UNISON's policy on the 'Right to Chose'. Pregnant women have the right to obtain treatment and advice in confidence free from harassment and intimidation.

Conference is concerned about the increase in groups such as "Abort 67" in recent years that target abortion clinics with the intention to harass and intimidate women, who are exercising their legal right to terminate a pregnancy.

This harassment is also aimed at clinic staff, forcing recent closures of clinics and staff having their personal safety threatened. The techniques include filming women, without consent, using false graphics and disturbing images aimed at stopping women accessing treatment and advice.

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Women should be able to enter clinics without being harassed or intimidated. Conference believes in the aims of the 'Back Off' campaign to have specific legislation to ensure women can access pregnancy advice and abortion centres free from interference and intimidation, as has been enacted in other countries. This campaign is also supported by the Royal College of Midwives and End Violence Against Women Coalition.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to;

- 1) To give public support to the "Back Off*" campaign – which puts a 'buffer zone' on protesters outside clinics
- 2) To lobby MP's on a statutory 'buffer zone' for all pickets outside clinics
- 3) Develop a strategy and campaign on these clinics
- 4) To support and show solidarity to staff working in this essential area

South East Region

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