**Bournemouth International Centre**

**03 Mar 2017 - 05 Mar 2017**

**Organising and Recruitment**

Recruitment & Organisation

**1. ORGANISING IN THE COMMUNITY SECTOR**

Conference notes that the Community Service Group is fast growing, with recruitment at an all time high.

However, there are significant problems in organising in such a diverse service group, with multiple employers, many of them small and geographically remote.

These problems are compounded by the lack of understanding of the role of trade union representatives. There is frequently little or no dialogue with employers regarding the expectations of UNISON around activism and participation, and no understanding of the benefits of trade union organisation for employers/manager who may have little or no experience of trade unionism.

Frequently, therefore, workplaces are left without a workplace rep, and members who wish to get involved – at a branch, regional or national level – are not given facility time to do so.

Clearly this impacts on our representative’s and potential representative’s ability to work with the employer to improve terms and conditions, negotiate workplace policies or represent members facing difficulties in the workplace.

Conference therefore calls upon the Service Group Executive to produce a resource for branches and regions, specifically targeting the community sector, with guidance on negotiating recognition and facility time agreements in this difficult environment.

***National Women's Committee***

**2. STRATEGY FOR ORGANISING AND DEVELOPING OUR WORK**

Conference notes the work undertaken by the Service Group Executive and in particular the Community Service Group in Scotland prior to the passing of 2016 National Delegate Conference Motion 2 ‘Organising for growth’.

The preliminary work carried out by the Community Service Group in Scotland included a brief outline of regional Community structures and précis of work being undertaken regionally at June 2013. This outlined a wide range of structures and models in place for organising, representing, negotiating on behalf of, supporting and developing our membership. A number of these models are innovative, effective and exemplify good practice.

Since that time, a number of developments have taken place. We now face a completely different political landscape; legislative changes reinforce the pernicious impact of austerity measures on our sector along with renewed constraints on our ability to organise effectively existing and potential trade union members.

Additionally, internal changes within UNISON in the form of initiatives such as Activity Based Budgeting, Regional Compacts and Regional Pool bidding processes provide opportunities for us to secure improved support and development for our membership in partnership with Regions and host Branches.

The valuable work already undertaken, along with the production of the Service Group Executive’s bi-annual survey, form the building blocks of what we are seeking to achieve for our members in Community and how we play a full and active part at all levels of UNISON’s lay decision-making process and beyond.

Conference believes that, in order to develop successfully and to support our increasing membership base, the service group must develop an effective strategy for organising and developing our collective work and how we inform UNISON’s national bargaining agenda and developmental priorities.

Conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to:

1. Commission a comprehensive research project which outlines the current picture of the organisation of our membership in UNISON highlighting the various models of organising with an evaluation of these.

2. Consult widely with Branches and Regions, Regional Community Service Group Committees, Self Organised Groups, Young Members, Retired Members and all parts of the Community membership on the barriers to participation and inclusion of our membership at all levels of UNISON’s.

3. Begin the process for formulating a strategy for developing and organising the work of the Service Group and present recommendations to 2018 Community Service Group Conference.

***North West Region***

**3. ORGANISING LGBT MEMBERS IN COMMUNITY**

Conference notes that while the community sector is expanding rapidly, it is under unprecedented pressure, with workers expected to meet ever growing and more complex needs with decreasing resources.

This is well-illustrated by the August 2016 report by the Consortium of LGBT voluntary and community organisations. 86% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community organisations reported an increasing demand for their services, while a fifth said that unless their income opportunities improved, they would not be operating in 12 months time.

Conference is concerned about the impact this has on the well being of workers in the community sector. LGBT members can face particular isolation, being a small minority in most workplaces, and subject to continuing prejudice and discrimination. As a result, the support and solidarity of UNISON membership and LGBT self organisation has never been more important.

UNISON’s first annual equality survey, conducted in summer 2016, found that a quarter of the 4500 members responding had witnessed or experienced unfair discrimination in their workplace and a third of members had experienced a mental health issue triggered by work and a fifth had taken time off because of work related stress.

For LGBT members, the proportion experiencing or witnessing discrimination rose to just under a third. Nearly half had experienced a mental health issue triggered by work and 29% had to take time off for work-related stress. For trans members, a shocking two thirds had experienced or witnessed discrimination.

Conference welcomes the finding in the survey that more than a quarter of members said they are more likely to get involved with UNISON than a year ago. The figure for LGBT members was 40% and for trans members only, a very impressive 50%.

Conference calls on the community service group executive to take up this challenge and work with branches in the community sector and with the LGBT group to take active steps to organise lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community members. This can include:

1. Publicising and promoting UNISON guidance on LGB and trans workers equality;

2. Urging branches with community members to:

1. publicise regional LGBT group meetings, encouraging and supporting members to attend;
2. seek to fill the LGBT branch officer post, encouraging those interested in the post or in the post to attend the national branch LGBT officer training;
3. encourage, promote and resource branch LGBT self organisation;
4. working with regional LGBT groups, support local prides, LGBT history month activities and other LGBT focussed events;

3. Publicising the new LGBT section of UNISON’s organising space as a resource for networking and sharing good practice;

4. Encouraging community members to update their confidential UNISON membership details with sexual orientation and gender identity information.

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

**4. CAUCUS MEETING**

This Conference notes that the Black members caucus meeting at the Community Service Group Conference is the only opportunity for Black members in the Community Sector to come together to discuss their issues. The caucus meeting have been used to identify potential motions for future Conferences as well as look at workplace and Branch issues.

The Black members caucus meeting is currently organised on request and not a part of the Community conference timetable.

This Conference believes that the Caucus meeting should be included in the Community Service Group Conference timetable and calls on the Community Service Group Executive to discuss how this can be achieved with the National Black Members Committee.

***National Black Members' Committee***

**5. FRAGMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY (WORKING) SECTOR**

Over the past few years the Fragmentation of the Community and Voluntary Sector has seen the decline of a number of community and voluntary organisations. This has resulted in the loss of staff and job roles leaving a void within the sector, where resources are diminishing.

Speaking at the 2016 community service group conference in Southport Stephen Thomas, from Northern region, described the community and voluntary sector as “a broken system held together by the compassion and dedication of an exploited workforce.”

Over the past year the nature of this work has dramatically changed as work areas have been broken up into smaller pieces to try and combat the effects of austerity cuts and drops in funding.

Those who are now working in the community and voluntary sector find themselves having to fulfil two or three jobs within their individual job roles; the fragmentation of the community and voluntary sector at the current rate opens the door for the sector to become privatised even more than it is now.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to organise in such a workforce where facility time is limited and workers cover a wide geographical area.

Conference therefore calls on the Community SGE to:

1. Put the subject of Fragmentation of The Community and Voluntary Sector on their 2017 Agenda for discussion.
2. Come up with a strategy as to how the community and voluntary sector can work locally and nationally to highlight what is happening to the sector.
3. Provide guidance to community and voluntary branches on how to organise in a fragmented workplace.
4. Ensure that resources are made available to provide support for all staff in community who are facing potential cuts to their terms and conditions.

***Greater London Region***

**Negotiating and Bargaining**

Negotiation and Bargaining

**6. COMMUNITY IN THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM.**

Conference is concerned that Tory economic policies and austerity agenda is drawing the community sector, in particular, national charities into a competitive market resulting in them placing a commercial value on services which impacts not only on the morale of workers but increasingly results in attacks to our member’s terms, conditions and pay.

More and more, charities are having to compete for funding in the ‘race to the bottom’ and to this end seeking ways in which they juggle their budgets, values and recruitment of staff but are failing miserably in doing so and increasingly appear to be adopting a private sector ethos.

There is an emerging trend in the community sector for the big charities to have comparative terms and conditions and this includes a move towards the introduction of market and regionalised pay.

Conference believes that this is a step towards the dismantling of the charitable sector and that market and regionalised pay, the removal of increments and cost of living increases and introduction of performance related pay awards contribute to inequality, economic disparity, poverty and the gender pay gap.

Conference is concerned that this is a start to the further erosion of terms and conditions of our members in the charitable sector.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Carry out a comparative analysis of the terms, conditions and pay mechanisms and structures of the top 10 main UK charities

2. Produce guidance on the impact of market and regionalised pay in the community sector

3. Regularly update branches on UNISON’s national pay strategy

***Barnardo's Branch (M)***

**7. FUNDING FOR CHARITIES AND THE "NATIONAL LIVING WAGE"**

Conference notes that in his 2015 Budget announcement the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, announced that the establishment of a “National Living Wage” for workers over the age of 25. The rate for this wage was established at £7.20 an hour from April 2016, rising to £9 an hour by 2020.

Conference disputes the label “National Living Wage” being given to a rebranded National Minimum Wage for the over 25s. Conference believes this is a cynical move to make political capital out of the real Living Wage which is set by the Living Wage Foundation. The rebranding has caused confusion for some employers, not least with those organisations which UNISON negotiates with in the Community sector. It is established UNISON policy to campaign for a real Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, to provide a minimum for all workers in the UK.

Nevertheless, though insufficient, a rise in statutory minimum earnings for over 25s should be welcomed.

Conference is, however, concerned that the Government is failing to provide adequate funding to meet the additional costs of this rise for organisations in the Community sector who are providing vital public services. Councils, health commissioning bodies and other public sector organisations who work with community organisations are often not able to provide the additional funding to cover this rise in costs. This leaves community employers caught between two government policies: austerity and the “National Living Wage.”

This problem is not limited to Community employers providing public services, but has also hit charities with a range of other responsibilities. Conference also believes that the government should be working closely with the sector to ensure these services are protected.

Conference believes that this situation is unacceptable because it will lead to job losses and significant reductions in service quality, as employers try to meet competing demands.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1) Write to all UNISON reps and negotiators in Community making them aware of the new minimum wages rates, with the aim of ensuring none of our members receive less that the statutory legal minimum.

2) Work with UNISON Labour Link and other stakeholders to gain political support for adequate funding to cover additional costs to the community sector of the creation of the “National Living Wage”. This includes lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

***National Major Charities Sector Committee***

**Campaigning**

Campaigns

**8. BREXIT**

Conference is concerned about the long-term impact on our Community member’s terms and conditions following the referendum result in which a majority of voters said they wanted the United Kingdom to leave the European Union.

With Brexit comes the real risk of a negative impact on funding for the sector which, if reduced, would have a knock on affect on members pay and conditions.

It is likely that Brexit will result in reduced income for the sector because of a fall in the value of sterling and rising inflation will hit disposable income for charitable giving. It is also possible that some corporations and individuals who are major donors will move away from the UK, reducing sponsorship, income and large gifts.

The impact of Brexit on public finances may also be significant for the sector. As a result of lower growth and tax revenues, the Government may reduce spending on public services, and by extension spending on services provided for the public sector by charities.

Conference also notes that the possible social consequences of Brexit, in terms of reduced social security spending and increased social tension, will inevitably place increased cost pressures on Community organisations.

Consequently, Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Directly input into UNISON’s Brexit work streams, in particular that of the EU Citizens Network.

2. Remain vigilant for attacks on pay and conditions of our members in the coming years, ensuring the union is there to protect our members whenever these attacks occur.

3. Work with UNISON Labour Link and other stakeholders to ensure adequate funding for the sector. This includes lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

***Community Service Group Executive***

**9. Bullying and Harassment**

Work life in the Community and Voluntary Sector should be about supporting individuals to achieve for them the best quality of life possible with the minimum of distraction and the maximum of support by colleagues and management. In reality it is nowhere near that Utopia, incredible as it may sound the culture of bullying and harassment in the workplace far exceeds the expectations of a union like UNISON. Workplace representatives deal with this sort of behaviour on a regular basis, and the culprits come from both sides of the fence, management and staff. But remember this issue is not just confined to the CVS Sector, it happens in public services and all types of employment.

Bullying at work has many faces – it can be directed at individuals or other instances where it relates to work activities. 'Bullies' are often – but not always – more senior than the person they are bullying. 'Bullies' sometimes target groups as well as individuals. Legally there is no definition of workplace bullying. It is believed however that bullying involves negative behaviour being targeted at an individual, or individuals, repeatedly and persistently over time.

Bullying at work can take many forms. It can involve:

a. Ignoring or excluding someone

b. Spreading malicious rumours or gossip

c. Humiliating someone in public

d. Giving someone unachievable or meaningless tasks

e. Constantly undervaluing someone’s work performance

Bullying is classed as a silent epidemic, it is a problem that incurs a huge cost in terms of employee well being and performance. Words and actions consciously targeting individuals to wound and affect harm. Bullying damages the physical, emotional and mental health of the person who is targeted. The workplace bully abuses power brings misery to his/her target and endeavours to steal the target's self-confidence. Bullies often involve others using many tactics such as blaming for errors, unreasonable work demands, insults, putdowns, stealing credit, threatening job loss, and discounting accomplishments affecting not only their work environment but family and domestic life.

The impact of bullying behaviour means that bullies create a terrible atmosphere within an organisation. Their behaviour leads to increased levels of stress among employees, higher rates of absenteeism and higher than normal churn of staff. Because bullies often get results by getting more short-term production out of employees, they are tolerated.

Harassment relates to unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, age, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. The Equality Act 2010 protects you from harassment at work by your employer or colleagues. It includes issues like abusive or threatening comments, jokes or behaviour.

Within the Community and Voluntary Sector the role of the individual employee is hard enough with issues around funding, staff shortages, terms & conditions pruning and salaries. To put up with bullying and harassment on top of everything else makes for a really depressive outlook for all staff.

In some cases management do not deal with this type of behaviour correctly and by not addressing the issues allow relationships to fester and this becomes the focus replacing the main reason for our roles... the individuals we support.

A study of 6,000 British office workers found employees who felt that their supervisors treated them fairly had a 30% lower risk of heart disease. The same study concluded that employees with good leaders were 40% more likely to report the highest levels of psychological well being including lower levels of anxiety and depression.

We call on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Survey the members working in the Community & Voluntary Sector to obtain a picture of the true extent of this issue in the workplace.

2. Respond to the results by launching a campaign to highlight the issue in the workplace of CVS organisations.

3. Support Health and Safety representatives of UNISON in these organisations to attempt to bring the issue clearly into the spotlight and encourage change in the attitude and deliverance by management of steps to identify and expunge this behaviour from the workplace.

***Cymru/Wales Region***

**10. EU NATIONALS WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

After the result of the Remain/Leave vote on 23 June 2016 the future of over 3 million people with the right to live in the United Kingdom was suddenly cast into doubt. The total number may be higher if their family members (spouses, parents, others) from outside the EU is taken into account. The current population of the United Kingdom is over 65m meaning these EEA (European Economic Area) citizens make up about 5% of the total population. Even though the referendum might greatly affect their future, they were not allowed to vote.

The reality of the situation however is that employers, charities and other not for profit organisations in the Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) need to be ready for the fact that the status of EU nationals could alter and the rules governing how employers use this valuable skills resource could change. Current rules state that permanent residency rights would apply where the individual has lived in the UK for more than five years, which almost 2.9 million would have done by 2019 – the year Britain is set to leave the EU.

There is very little that is going to happen overnight, there is a two-year breakaway period while the details of the withdrawal are worked out. Determining the impact the Leave result would have on employers & organisations is difficult as there are so many factors to take into consideration. Even if little will change in the short term, employers need to prepare for the potential consequences.

There is evidence to show that a large percentage of EU Nationals and migrant workers are employed within the Community Sector. One of the greatest attributes that staff in the CVS have is the regular consistency of contact, whether that is in a supported living environment, day centre facilities, health & welfare support, residential care, home care services. The vulnerable adults and children that are provided with this day to day support rely on the regular appearances of familiar staff to help them ensure that the quality of life they enjoy is maintained. This is in spite of the salaries within the Community & Voluntary Sector being some of the lowest in the UK.

The important message to a great deal of employers is to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the workforce, changes in circumstances can have an adverse effect on the vulnerable in our society that rely on CVS staff to provide the support that is an important part of their lives.

One unsavoury aspect of the vote to leave the EU has been the increase in behaviour of a racist and discriminatory nature, not only on the streets of the UK but in workplaces and organisations. This attitude to the EU nationals cannot be tolerated in a civilised society and it is the responsibility of employers to ensure company policy is strictly adhered to, and where instances of this abusive and discriminatory attitude is shown to have taken place to deal with in the strongest terms to send out the message that is will not be condoned.

Employers can assist by:

1. Adopting and promoting zero-tolerance anti-discrimination policies.
2. Have a system in place so that staff can report discrimination at work easily, and have confidence employers will take it seriously and deal with issues promptly.
3. Work with UNISON to train and support staff to recognise and report this type of behaviour.

We call on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Facilitate further training for CVS reps and members on tackling discrimination at work.

2. Provide support for Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic and migrant groups to become more involved in branch activity.

3. Survey UNISON CVS members to gauge attitudes and identify issues and then mount a campaign to ensure that all EU nationals and migrant workers in the sector are treated with respect and favour without the threat of racism and discrimination.

***YMLAEN – FORWARD***

**11. VIOLENCE AGAINST COMMUNITY WORKERS**

Conference notes the mounting evidence that violence against staff working for Community employers is a serious and growing problem. In October 2016, the BBC broadcast information gathered by 'Inside Housing' showing that seven out of ten workers from housing associations had been either physically or verbally abused in the preceding twelve months.

These appalling incidents include staff being punched, pushed and kicked. There were also reports of staff being threatened with a weapon and being held against their will.

In addition to these more extreme incidents, it is becoming clear that lower level violence and verbal abuse is becoming a routine part of the working lives of many of our Community members. The 2015 UNISON survey of members across the service group found that 48% had experienced an incident of violence or aggression at work in the previous two years, whilst 27% felt threatened by violence or aggression at work.

Conference believes that both verbal and physical abuse of workers is totally unacceptable and urgent action is needed to change this trend within the community and voluntary sector.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Develop a “Violence at Work Charter” which sets out a series of interventions which community employers should make to reduce the number of violent incidents which staff are subjected to.
2. Include within the Charter such actions as: collecting and monitoring data on violent incidents, support pathways for victims, thorough risk assessments for staff being placed in vulnerable situations and training to ensure staff are aware of the appropriate way to deal with threatening situations.
3. Pilot a campaign for getting employers to sign up to the Charter in the housing association sector, then, in the longer-term, expand the campaign to cover all community employers.
4. Work with UNISON Labour Link and other stakeholders to gain political support for the Charter. This includes lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

***Community Service Group Executive***

**12. SICK PAY**

Conference believes that it is fundamentally wrong that so many employers in the community and voluntary Sector offer very restrictive sick pay schemes or have no scheme at all. In the modern era, a period of time off with full pay should be a basic right to which all workers are entitled. Statutory sick pay is only £88.45 per week for workers who qualify to receive it.

Conference notes that many staff are going into work whilst sick, particularly those working in the care sector. UNISON's 2015 Community and Voluntary Sector Survey showed that 85% of members had gone into work whilst unwell in the preceding two years (up from 78% in 2013). Only 63% of members in the service group had access to sick pay above the statutory minimum.

Conference notes that failure to offer an adequate sick pay scheme is not only wrong, but also counterproductive. There is strong evidence to show that people who have to rush back to work are more likely to become ill again. Rushing people back causes stress, anxiety and illness for the worker, but also has the potential to lead to higher long-term absentee and high turnover rates for the employer.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Plan and deliver a campaign to name and shame major employers in the sector who offer either highly restrictive or no sick pay schemes to their employees.

2. Write to the relevant employers, informing them that UNISON intends to name them, and encourage them to work with us to implement an adequate scheme.

3. Work with UNISON Labour Link and other stakeholders to highlight this issue. This includes lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

4. Continue to campaign against austerity and cuts to public spending which are exacerbating problems with low pay across the community and voluntary sector.

***Community Service Group Executive***

**13. HEALTH & SAFETY ADHERENCE FOR LONE WORKING**

Within the Community and Voluntary Sector there are many members that due to the requirements of the services provided find themselves in the position of lone working. There are services up and down the country with many organisations that provide support to the vulnerable that live in single occupancy homes or within supported living schemes that for one reason or another are occupied by only one service user.

Lone working means long hours alone with a service user who may or may not have challenging behaviour of some description. Working alone can have the same risks as faced by other groups of staff, but the issues faced can have greater consequences because the support worker is working alone. These issues can involve physical attack, threats and verbal abuse. It is reported that as many as 46% of the UK workforce in full time employment count themselves as lone workers and a recent survey shows that around 150 lone workers are attacked every day.

Lone work does not automatically imply a higher risk of violence, but it is generally understood that working alone does increase the vulnerability of staff. The Health and Safety Executive gives the definition of lone working as: “Someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision.”

Employees within the Community and Voluntary Sector are dedicated, conscientious and aware of the needs of individuals that they support on a daily basis and where they are required to lone work they should have the full protection from the organisations that they are employed by. All organisations should have a Lone Working policy, but due to issues with contracts that affect funding to the organisations it is becoming an increasingly regular position where staff are expected to work alone sometimes with more than one individual and this will increase the risks and the possibility of dealing with threatening situations.

Examples of incidents:

a. Verbal abuse and harassment, including racial and personal abuse.

b. Physical assaults.

c. Threats of physical violence, including the use of weapons. Intimidating behaviour.

d. Staff being shut in a room and not allowed to leave.

Health and Safety and management play a major part in maintaining a safe and danger free environment and with organisations in the Third Sector providing services in the face of difficult financial times, it is sometimes taken for granted that staff will be confident and be able to handle tricky situations alone. Managers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of staff and to this end it is also noted that consistency in support reduces the risks but for one reason or another is not always the case and this can be a catalyst to challenging behaviour. Rota management is the key and this can reduce the risks that can arise by ensuring staff are supporting individuals where there is empathy, understanding of needs and a general respect between the individuals and staff.

We call on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Support the Community and Voluntary Sector workers by developing a National Campaign to highlight the risks and hazards associated with Lone Working.

2. Work with UNISON Health and Safety representatives in the sector to ensure that all adequate safeguards and checks are in place to protect and limit the vulnerability of Lone Workers.

***Cymru/Wales Region***

**14. RAISING THE BAR IN SOCIAL CARE**

Conference welcomes the national campaign Save Our Services and the national day of action which took place on November 16th 2016, which highlighted the need to retain Social Care services in-house and to encourage providers to adopt UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter.

Conference notes that the North West Region in partnership initially with 35 branches across the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester Combined Authority Devolution areas (and supported by the Regional Community Service Group) has embarked on a wide-ranging campaign to establish UNISON as the leading social care trade union.

This campaign, over a period of 2 years, requiring significant financial and organisational investment, aims to increase membership, build density and strong sustainable workplace organisation in both domiciliary and residential social care.

Utilising best practice from the previous experience of other UNISON Regional campaigns and initiatives, this campaign seeks to build wide-ranging community support to improve the working conditions of employees and expose the questionable business practices of employers and providers.

In partnership with Citizens UK, Labour Link structures and community organisations it will implement community and political campaigns to secure political commitment to UNISON’s Ethical Care and Residential Care Charters from the candidates in the Mayoral elections in 2017 and the commissioners and providers of services.

This campaign, in conjunction with its partners, ultimately seeks to develop a long-term strategy for the sector to tackle under-funding, business profiteering, poor commissioning practices and an improvement in the working conditions and dignity of those employed to deliver a crucial public service.

Conference welcomes this campaign and calls on the Service Group Executive to:

1. Continue to actively support campaigns to highlight nationally the situation of workers in Social Care.

2. Actively publicise the work Regional Service Groups and Regions are undertaking to recruit and organise with the Social Care Sector.

3. Work with UNISON National Office, Regions and Branches to produce guidance on best practice for campaigning in the Social Care sector.

4. Work with UNISON National Office to produce effective negotiating, bargaining and other appropriate resources for use by activists and workplace representatives in Social Care at local level.

***North West Region***

**15. VIOLENCE AT WORK AND SICK PAY**

Conference believes it is fundamentally wrong that some workers in the charity sector, and other sectors covered by the Community Service Group, who are exposed to violent situations in the course of their work, sustaining injuries are then suffering doubly because their employer fail to pay sick pay, or pay inadequate statutory sick pay.

The most recent UNISON survey of Community members shows that almost half had experienced an incident of violence or aggression at work in the last two years. The types of aggression were described as physical abuse (24%), verbal threats (19%), and verbal abuse (58%).

Conference believes that Community employers should focus on two areas. Firstly, they should be taking all steps necessary to reduce the number of violent incidents that their staff are exposed to. Secondly, no employee who becomes victim of violence in the course of their work should suffer financial detriment as a result.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1) Campaign within the sector to ensure that attendance management is used as a supportive tool, not a punitive measure.

2) Campaign to make it a fundamental principle that no employee in the Community Sector should suffer a financial detriment as a result of injuries they have received in the course of their work.

3) To include as part of this campaign, work with stakeholders within the sector, including communications with UNISON negotiators and umbrella organisations representing employers to raise this issue up their agenda.

***National Major Charities Sector Committee***

**16. STAYING ALIVE – THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY CUTS ON LGBT WORKERS IN COMMUNITY**

Conference notes the report “Staying Alive: The Impact of Austerity Cuts on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Voluntary and Community Sector in England and Wales 2014, a report commissioned by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) which identified that reductions in funding from the public sector mean that LGBT community organisations are having to diversify their search for funding.

The findings of the report in respect of the impact of cuts included:

1. increased difficulty in planning,
2. using reserves to cover shortfalls in the short term,
3. cuts to or reductions in services and service levels,
4. reduced staffing levels with loss of posts and redundancies,
5. reductions in terms and conditions,
6. moves to part time work for previously full time staff
7. increased reliance on volunteers
8. loss of morale, higher staff turnover and reduction in provision of expertise.

Conference notes that since 2014, the situation for the community sector and in particular for specialist LGBT services and for our LGBT members has become increasingly difficult. Concern about the viability of contracts has increased, with commissioners expecting “more for less”. The “race to the bottom” results in attacks on our terms and conditions, introduction of short term contracts and increasing job insecurity and low pay. LGBT members do not feel confident to speak out when they experience harassment or discrimination for fear of losing their jobs, particularly in small workplaces.

This is confirmed by research by NatCen Social Research for UNISON, published at the end of 2016, on the implications of reductions to public spending for LGB and T people and services. This research found a disproportionate impact of public spending cuts on LGBT people. It uncovered a dangerous mix of:

1. LGBT groups considered less of a priority to fund and less ‘popular’ with funders;
2. closure of specialist LGBT community services with resulting redundancies;
3. remaining services struggling to survive: increasingly staffed by volunteers or staff on short-term contracts and with some workers having to meet costs from their own pockets;
4. surviving specialist LGBT community groups expected to take on a much broader equality remit, adding considerably to workload and workplace stress
5. cuts to local authority and NHS services meaning loss of their equality specialists, resulting in ‘mainstream’ services increasingly signposting service users to specialist community services, adding further to demand;
6. service users’ needs increasing in complexity and severity at the very time the capacity of the community sector and its workers to meet these needs is under unprecedented strain.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive, liaising with the national LGBT committee and other self organised groups, to:

1. publicise these NatCen and TUC findings to branches with community members, to promote our campaign for proper funding of our vital community services;
2. keep the impact of cuts on LGBT workers on the bargaining agenda;
3. circulate guidance to branches on involvement in commissioning processes to secure workplace rights and equality commitments;
4. keep community members regularly informed of developments in bargaining on LGBT equality and other equality issues via its e-bulletin.

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

**17. COMBATING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT OF DISABLED WORKERS IN THE COMMUNITY SECTOR**

Conference notes that workplaces in the Community sector are wide and varied ranging from national charities with thousands of workers to small organisations with a handful of staff. UNISON’s organisation within the Community sector is similarly varied with members being attached to national branches, dedicated community and voluntary sector branches, housing association branches. In some cases they are members of local government or health branches. Members working in isolation have told us that in some cases they have difficulty knowing who to turn to in times of crisis.

Conference notes that the Health and Safety Executive and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report increasing stress related absences in the public sector including the community sector. This does not come as a surprise with workers experiencing increasing workloads, longer hours, cuts in terms and conditions, lone working and living in a climate of austerity.

Conference notes with great concern the high number of disabled workers experiencing bullying and harassment at work. Research by CIPD found that 37% of disabled workers experienced bullying and harassment, compared to 18% of non-disabled workers. Further, research from Cardiff University highlighted that the type of disability an individual has can significantly affect their likelihood of experiencing bullying at work. For example 21% of those with learning disabilities experienced violence at work compared to 10% of disabled workers overall and 5% of those without a disability.

UNISON’s Scottish Young Members Committee undertook a survey, as part of their anti-bullying project - “Gonnae No Dae That” – about bullying and harassment amongst young workers, which included responses from disabled people. One of the major findings was that 50% of respondents with a disability reported their health and wellbeing was adversely impacted due to bullying and harassment, compared to 39% of those without a disability. The health impacts for all groups were exceptionally wide ranging from members suffering from anxiety and depression to attempts at suicide.

Conference is concerned that disabled people experiencing bullying and harassment may not take action for a number of reasons which can include fear of losing their job; that the bullying and harassment will be compounded, particularly in small workplaces; lack of ineffective workplace policies to tackle such behaviour; and not having anyone to turn to.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to work with National Disabled Members Committee to:-

1. carry out an online survey of branches for distribution to members working in the community sector to identify whether in the last year members have

(i) experienced work related stress; and

(ii) the reasons for this including bullying and harassment, unrealistic case loads

 The survey should also ask:

1. whether members identify as disabled to see where and how disabled workers are at higher risk of stress and ill health.
2. whether members sought advice from their union branch and if not, the reasons why not.

2. produce a report of the findings from the survey and any recommendations

3. circulate information, to branches in the community sector on bullying and harassment within the workplace.

***National Disabled Members Committee***

**18. CONTRACTS AND RETENDERS**

Conference notes that increasing cuts to local authority budgets and dwindling funding sources has led to contracts and retenders becoming increasingly competitive. More and more often the community sector has to compete with private companies. Contracts and future funding are being cut to the bone but the work required is being increased and the demand for services is at an all-time high. Often there is not even enough money in these contracts to pay more than the minimum wage and some contracts are not economically viable resulting in forced redundancies, reduced staffing and the reduction of hours for existing workers.

Conference notes that this can have a serious impact on the wellbeing and safety of workers in the community sector. Due to the nature of the work, some of our members who work out in the community are required to carry out lone working. For example face to face time with a customer may be 5 hours for 7 customers for a worker who works 37 hours a week. With reduced hours and staffing levels, this does not allow for safe working practices, sufficient travelling time, supervision time, recording and liaising with other agencies.

Many employees are impacted on, but disabled employees are at a distinct disadvantage. For many, their reasonable adjustments are not implemented fully, immediately putting them at a disadvantage.

Risk Assessments are routinely overlooked, for instance employees with mobility issues are being scheduled to work with clients in blocks without lift access and are having to carrying equipment between properties. Their travel times between client visits are also being ignored and the reporting and contact systems are not up to standard. We understand that some Health and Safety matters can be compromised in relation to contract costs.

Conference notes that when cuts to staffing occur because of pressures to fulfil contracts and hours with customers disabled members are an easy target, and can be put on performance plans and dismissed, or made redundant.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. develop a campaign to raise public awareness of the essential work carried out by our members within the Community sector and highlight the poor funding going into this sector.
2. circulate to branches in the community sector guidance on disability discrimination in the workplace and unfair selection for redundancy on the grounds of disability
3. circulate to branches in the community sector good practice including on equality within the contract and retendering process

***National Disabled Members Committee***

**19. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND CHARITIES THAT REFUSE TO RECOGNISE TRADE UNIONS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS**

This Community conference notes:-

That a number of UK Housing Associations and Charities do not recognise trade unions for collective bargaining.

Some of these employers are union busters and have de-recognised trade unions, attacked union representatives and blacklisted union and safety activists.

The UN Charter of Human Rights, as well as International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, makes it clear that it is an absolute human right of all employees not only to join a trade union but also to be protected by collective bargaining agreements over jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

Any employer that refuses to recognise trade unions and is hostile to union activists and organisers is committing human rights violations and must be treated as such.

Major UK Housing Associations and Charities have and continue to receive huge amounts of public money either in direct support, grants, benefits, subsidies, donations or taxable relief.

UNISON wants to work in partnership with employers to improve employee relations which we genuinely believe will benefit our clients, customers and workers. However we will not tolerate human rights abuses.

This Conference resolves

To call upon our SGE and UNISON Labour Link to support a campaign for all UK Housing Associations and Charities to recognise trade unions for collective bargaining. This campaign may involve taking legal industrial action if necessary in accordance with UNISON rules.

If any UK Housing Association or Charity refuses to recognise trade unions for the purposes of collective bargaining and victimises or blacklists activists and organisers then we call upon the SGE and UNISON Labour link to support campaigns within our rules in favour of recognition and against such victimisation and blacklisting.

If any Housing Association or Charity refuses to respect the human rights of our members to collective bargaining and victimised or blacklists union activists then we should as a last resort call upon the general public, local authorities and the Government to make it clear to these organisations that, due to their failure to observe basic international human rights, they will review whether they are fit and proper organisations that they should work with and have procurement, partnership and other commercial arrangements with.

 ***Housing Associations Branch (M)***

**Efficient and Effective Union**

Efficient and Effective Union

**20. Monitoring Activism**

The National Black Member’s Committee welcomes the data it received from the UNISON RMS membership database in 2012. The data shows that there are fewer than average Black activists, but more white activists.

The categories for Caribbean, African, Asian, Indian (UK other) needs to be updated and used to encourage Black members to become more active and identify their ethnicity.

This Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to work with the National Black Members Committee to develop a strategy to encourage the participation of Black members in the Community Service group.

***National Black Members' Committee***

**Motions Ruled Out of Order**

Not sufficiently clear

**Motion Axe the Housing Act**

This Community Conference Notes:

The recently passed Housing & Planning Act contains controversial measures such as the extended Right to Buy for Housing Associations which will lead to a further depletion of Housing Association social and real affordable homes.

Under the “Pay to Stay” tax Housing Association tenants who live in London with a combined household income of more than £40,000 will be liable to pay up to market value or lose their home. Those who live in the rest of England who have a total income of £31,000 face the same. Although there will be a certain income disregard it will mean a massive increase in rent and tenants could face, what will effectively be, an income tax penalty rate of 83%. Those affected will be not just the well paid but caretakers, school cooks, street cleaners, hospital porters, gardeners.

The policy will be voluntary for Housing Associations.

The LGA has recently estimated that more than 70,000 social housing tenants will have to pay an average rent rise of £1000 per year under pay to stay.

Housing Association workers will be required to demand personal and private financial information from all their tenants even those who have never applied for housing or council benefits.

Furthermore the Act will also end lifetime security of tenure for Housing Association tenants, restrict successions of tenancies and undermine the role of the regulator and give greater planning powers to private developers.

This Community Conference notes that the Government will have to return to Parliament to gain approvals for regulations and enabling legislation regarding Housing Associations. This gives us campaigning opportunities.

This Community Conference calls for:-

* Our SGE and UNION Labour link to be requested to help Labour Councils, Mayors, Assembly members, Labour Groups and CLPs to actively campaign against the Act and to oppose its implementation.
* To lobby our Housing Associations employers and persuade them not to volunteer to sell their stock under “right to buy” and impose the pay to stay tax on their tenants.
* Whenever possible to organise local public meetings of Housing Association residents and publish information about what the Act means to residents
* To work together with Housing Association tenants, residents and community groups as well as sister trade unions to oppose the Act

 ***Housing Associations Branch (M)***

**Motion “Housing Associations have lost their soul”**

This community conference notes:

That UK Housing Associations used to be genuinely progressive and democratic social housing organisations accountable to their tenants while providing high quality, affordable homes and responsible services.

Many used to have effective and well run Tenant & Resident Associations (TRA) and have executive boards that reflected the local community as well as being open, transparent, inclusive and most important of all - accountable.

Trade Unions, TRAs and local authorities were seen as vital stakeholders and partners.

Recently Housing Associations have started to dismantle TRAs and replace them with “focus groups” and so called “residents representatives” - interviewed and appointed by senior management.

Elected Councillors have been removed from Executive Boards.

Some Housing Associations refuse to recognise the human rights of their workers by de-recognising trade unions while victimising and blacklisting union activists.

Housing Associations which treat their residents badly also tend to treat their workers badly as well.

This community conference resolves:-

To campaign and lobby against all Housing Associations that do not have democratically elected and financially supported independent Tenants and Residents Associations.

To ask the SGE to see if it is feasible to help set up a body that would work with other trade unions, councillors, Assembly members, MSPs, MPs and resident groups to campaign to make Housing Associations become democratic and accountable.

To support the call that at least 50% of all Housing Association Board Members should be genuine Resident elected representatives (which may include local Councillors and community organisations and at least one trade union representative)

Campaign for residents of Housing Associations that consistently fail to be progressive and democratic and do not perform adequate housing management functions to be given the right to allowed the opportunity to vote on a transfer of their homes to another Landlord including Local Authorities.

***Housing Associations Branch (M)***