

**2017 National Women's Conference
UNISON FINAL AGENDA**

UNISON

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

16-18 FEBRUARY 2017

BRIGHTON CENTRE

FINAL AGENDA

2017 National Women's Conference

UNISON FINAL AGENDA

Negotiating and Bargaining

1. ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS - CLOSING THE LOOPHOLES

Over the past few years, national women's conference has discussed concerns at the growing use and abuse of zero hours contracts.

According to data from the Office of National Statistics, these contracts disproportionately impact on women workers, and they are primarily focused on work traditionally undertaken by women, such as cleaning and caring work. However, there is increasing use across all fields, including widespread use throughout the NHS and generally in the public sector.

Conference has heard before of the particular challenges that face women on zero hours contracts, particularly those with caring roles who are unable to plan cover for their working hours when these are irregular and frequently unplanned, as well as the problems accessing working tax credits and the inability to budget when income is variable.

The government has been challenged to close the loopholes which allow employers to exploit those on zero hours contracts, and although they have taken some limited action, there is still glaring inequality.

There is particular complexity around the definition of workers vs employees, and employers use this to their advantage, and to avoid being subject to a multitude of employment rights which only apply to "employees".

There is evidence of employers:

- forcing workers to adopt self-employed status – particularly women health care staff who are told by agencies of the "benefits" of being self employed, but not of the drawbacks;
- changing the job titles/roles of workers in a minor way, to avoid time limits for employment rights – which is particularly easy to do for admin/clerical workers, who are primarily women;
- avoiding redundancy payments by changing staff to zero hours contracts but then failing to offer any hours of work – effectively forcing them to leave;
- manipulating working hours so that women are unable to meet the threshold for occupational pension schemes.

Conference acknowledges the excellent work already carried out by UNISON in challenging the unfair practices which persist for workers on zero hours contracts, and calls upon the national women's committee to work with the NEC, service groups, Bargaining Support, Labour Link and all other appropriate bodies to:

- 1) raise awareness of the loopholes which allow employers to exploit those on zero hours contracts;

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- 2) issue guidance to branches on how to work with employers to ensure that unfair practices are eliminated;
- 3) lobby the government for further legislative change to close the loopholes and create a level playing field so that all workers benefit from all employment rights.

National Women's Committee

Campaigning

2. CHANGES TO STATE PENSION AGE FOR WOMEN BORN IN THE 1950's

Conference is aware that in recent years governments have increased the state pension for all women born on or after 6 April 1951. The changes were implemented with little or no notice, faster than first promised, leaving women little or no time to make alternative plans. Retirement plans for some women have been shattered with devastating consequences. When this group of women started work they were often paid much less than men and often excluded from workplace pension schemes. This generation has benefitted little from the social and legal changes that have improved working women's lives and yet they are now being asked to shoulder much of the burden of equalisation with men. This change will affect over 2.5 million women.

These changes have led to poverty amongst a group of women who thought they were getting their state pensions at the age of 60. After all, this is what they were told when they started working. The lack of notice has meant that many women have lost significant amounts of money while also not having been given enough notice to make alternative plans for their retirement.

Working longer – or working at all – will not be possible for all. An employment history of part-time, low-paid jobs is fairly typical for this generation of women. They raised children at a time when childcare was at best patchy and at worst non-existent. They have been dealt a 'double whammy'. They have been told they should be working up to the age of 65 and older but when they apply for jobs there appear to be barriers to them not being offered them. In addition to this many women find themselves redundant or caring for elderly relatives and grand-children.

Women up and down the country have felt so aggrieved by the changes that they have come together and set up a group called WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality). WASPI are fighting the injustice done to women born on or after 6 April 1951 regarding the changes to their state pension age. They are currently campaigning for improved transitional arrangements to be put in place.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Women's Committee to

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- 1) To campaign for all women born on or after 6 April 1951 and to urge the government to look at improved transitional arrangements for them.
- 2) To liaise with Labour Link to bring this issue to the notice of MPs in all parties.
- 3) Encourage regions, branches and members to make links with their local WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) campaign in efforts to achieve fairer transitional arrangements for women born on or after 6 April 1951 affected by rises in the state pension age.
- 4) Campaign against the ageism which presents additional barriers to older women in the labour market.
- 5) To campaign for all affected women members to write to their MPs and also the DWP.
- 6) To report back to the 2018 Women Members Conference on actions taken and what has been achieved.

South West Yorkshire Partnership Health

3. EQUALISATION OF STATE PENSION AGE

This Conference notes and supports the current WASPI (Women against State pension Increase) campaign.

Whilst Conference believes that the equalisation of the pension was the right decision to take in meeting equality obligations, the decision to equalise at age 65 was nothing more than a cost cutting exercise.

Hundreds of thousands of women have had significant changes imposed on them with a lack of appropriate notification.

The failure to adequately communicate to millions of women the financial impact of equalisation was scandalous and has left many women's retirement plans in chaos.

Conference believes that the Government must offer a full package of transitional arrangements for all women born on or after 6th April 1951 who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA).

Inequality of women's pensions is not new. Our pension system has been characterized by a state pension too low to live on and dependence on occupational and private pensions which cannot provide a comfortable old age to the low-paid and irregularly employed, most of whom are female.

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

- 1) Continue support for the WASPI Campaign;

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- 2) Campaign for a full package of transitional arrangements for all women born on or after 6th April 1951
- 3) In the longer term, campaign for a reduction in the equalisation age to 60;
- 4) Campaign for an adequate, universal, basic state pension for all citizens.

Scotland Region

4. WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS - SUPPORTING THE WASPI CAMPAIGN

Conference notes that the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) campaign started in 2011 when the State Pension Age was increased for men and women so it equalises at 66 instead of 65 by 2020. Whilst the first changes were announced in 1995 - some 20 years ago, many women were unaware of how they would be affected, and the government has since accelerated the change to the state pension age, putting these women at further disadvantage.

Whilst it is true that the state pension age has been equalised and men are also affected, women are historically significantly lower paid and more likely to have to rely on their state pension alone. Further, account has not been sufficiently taken of women's childcare and caring responsibilities, the greater likelihood of them working part-time; and the qualification period in respect of paid employment creates another barrier to women who are unable to comply with this requirement and achieve the maximum state pension.

UNISON has a long history of campaigning and negotiating for decent state and occupational pensions for our members. Now, more than ever, it is essential to continue that fight, and to ensure that women of all ages are aware of the implications of failing to invest in a future pension, and of what the future may hold in terms of their state pension.

Conference calls upon the national women's committee to work with the NEC and other relevant bodies in UNISON to use whatever means possible in the campaign to:

- 1) Raise awareness of the adverse impact of the government changes to the state pension age for UNISON members, in the main women born in the 1950s who may be left bereft of a state pension, or receive an inadequate state pension on retirement;
- 2) work with the WASPI campaign, where appropriate, on a fair deal for women;
- 3) continue to defend and protect members' rights to fair pay and pensions, including recognition of the impact of low pay and caring responsibilities on many women's ability to achieve a decent pension;

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- 4) ensure young women and future generations have access to good pension provisions.

National Women's Committee

5. RETIREMENT - WHAT RETIREMENT!

The Conservative government in 1995 included into the Pension Act (1995) provision to raise the pension age of women from 60 to 65 so that it would be in line with men's retirement age. The Conservative led Coalition government's Pension Act of 2011, implemented a much faster timetable for bringing in the changes and this has led to hundreds of thousands of women suffering a huge loss of up to £15,000 in lost State Pensions.

Campaigning group WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) have undertaken extensive research in their campaigning efforts to get the current government to re-think the timetable in order to make it a much fairer transition for women affected by the changes. The Conservative government of 1995 completely ignored the recommendations that between 10 to 15 years notice should be given to women who would be affected by the changes. The Conservative government then and now continue to show a blatant disregard for women by (a) ignoring the advice from the Turner Commission and Saga in 1995 to give a notice period to women, (b) sending letters to some of the women to be affected 14 years after the 1995 Pension Act was enacted, and (c) speeding up the original timetable of implementation leaving hundreds of thousands of women out of pocket. Many women claim that they were only notified about any changes when the coalition government announced the speeding up of the original timetable, whilst some still say they have never received a letter at all. The issue is not about the fact that women and men will retire at the same age, the issue is about the unfairness in which the changes to women's state pensions are being implemented. One example of this is that women of a similar age could have disproportionately longer to wait for their pension, for example a one year difference in a woman's date of birth can make an almost three year difference to their state pension age!

Conference recognises the campaigning and negotiating work that UNISON does on behalf of members on pensions. WASPI is a women's campaign that is generating huge support, from individual people, trade unions and also more recently from employers too. Derbyshire Council recently added its support to the campaign. As UNISON is the largest public sector union, Conference believes that UNISON could show support by raising awareness of the issues for women and of the WASPI campaign by talking to our member and employers.

Conference instructs the national women's committee to work with relevant UNISON committee's and departments, Labour Link, WASPI and any other relevant external agencies to;

- 1) Support the WASPI campaign

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- 2) Develop information leaflets and a briefing sheet so that branch women's officer and branches can raise awareness of the campaign and encourage support at a local level and in particular with employers.

South East Region

6. THE WAGE PENALTY OF MOTHERHOOD

In August 2016 a report published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed how the Gender Pay Gap is growing year on year after childbirth.

Many Women are forced to leave better paid jobs due to the pressure of caring responsibilities and the lack of flexible working.

Without more well paid part time jobs and affordable childcare the gender pay gap will take years to close.

Conference by the age of 42, mothers who are in full time work are earning 11% less than full time women without children.

And Conference, it is among the lowest educated women that the pay gap has increased the most. The pay gap widens for 12 years after childbirth for mothers to the point that they are earning 33% less an hour than men.

To address the motherhood pay penalty we call upon the NWC to work with all relevant bodies including the TUC and Labour Link to campaign for:-

- 1) More support for equal parenting roles to stop women being held back at work
- 2) Better paid leave for partners
- 3) Free childcare from the end of maternity leave to help younger mothers with less seniority and lower pay to stay in work
- 4) More better paid jobs, to be available flexibly, i.e. job shares, part-time working, compressed hours etc
- 5) Better enforcement of legislation against discrimination linked to pregnancy and childbirth
- 6) Improved access to justice – new mothers should not have to pay £1,200 to challenge pregnancy discrimination at tribunals and they should be given longer than 3 months to pursue a tribunal claim.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

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7. PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION

Since the Tories have been in power, employment laws have become lax, the laws which are in place to protect our most vulnerable in society continue to be flouted and used by employers to stifle members. Basic principles are failing to be followed resulting in many women being discriminated against. This is often the case during pregnancy and the maternity period (which includes breastfeeding). More and more frequently employers are failing to consult properly with women who are on maternity leave, are not carrying out work place risk assessments and are treating women differently if they are of child bearing age.

It is not appropriate to allow these discriminations to go on unchallenged. These women need to be protected. What makes this even more sad is that often these practices are unintentional. Managers and employers are inadequately educated in their obligations around pregnancy and maternity discrimination and whilst acknowledgment must be given that there is evidence of intentional discrimination, there is a real challenge of employers being under pressure to do more for less due to the swinging cuts by central government. Not allowing time for proper valuable consultation with ALL staff, considering the impacts of changes on services and individuals.

According to a report published by the equality and human rights commission in 2015 around 54,000 women are losing jobs every year in Britain due to pregnancy discrimination, almost twice the amount since the initial study in 2005. In addition around 10% of mothers were found to be discouraged from attending antenatal appointments in work time. In addition the report also highlighted that:

- 10% of women said they were treated worse by their employer after returning to work after having a baby
- one in five new mothers – as many as 100,000 mothers a year – experienced harassment or negative comments from colleagues, employer or manager when pregnant or returning from maternity leave
- 7% said they were put under pressure to hand in their notice
- One in 20 reported receiving a cut in pay or bonus after returning to their job

This coupled with the changes in employment tribunal fees makes it easier for employers to take advantage of women during a vulnerable phase of their lives.

Conference we need to challenge pregnancy discrimination whether it be intentional or not. What may begin as unintentional, if it goes unchallenged, will become the panacea and will be accepted more widely in the workforce. We are protected by the equality act, protecting women during pregnancy and maternity and these should be enforced.

Therefore we ask the National Women's Committee too:

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- 1) Work with regions to provide guidance on challenging pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace
- 2) Produce a code of good practice to support women who are pregnant or during the maternity phase which branches can use to support these women.
- 3) Work with LAOS and regions to provide pregnancy and maternity discrimination training session to activists
- 4) Work with regions to Increase awareness of pregnancy and maternity rights

Northern Region

8. WOMEN AND THE CUTS – STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL CAMPAIGNING

Research continues to show that the significant disproportionate negative impacts of the government's austerity policies fall on women, particularly Black women and women who are low paid and/or from low income households (in which women dominate) despite government claims that the burden would be shared equally. Women are the primary carers for children and the elderly and provide unpaid labour where services have been cut. Women are likely to live in poverty because they make up the majority of workers in low paid and insecure work, or retire into poverty with barely subsistence pensions to live on.

Women have borne the brunt of central and local government austerity measures and policies since 2010. Gender inequality has widened as a consequence and according to the Women's Budget Group the austerity measures planned for 2015 to 2020 are going to be ever more regressive. Research shows that by choosing to repay the deficit from cutting spending, rather than increasing taxation, further entrenches inequality. The 2016 Budget saw 86% of the savings from direct taxes and benefits coming from women's pockets. By 2020, female lone parents and single female pensioners will, on average, have seen their living standards fall by 20%. (Women's Budget Group).

Conference applauds UNISON on the work to date on raising awareness of and campaigning on the disproportionate impact on women of the government's austerity measures. Conference recognises the work that UNISON and the national women's committee undertake on behalf of women members and we congratulate national women's committee on the women's campaigning handbook which is updated every year after women's conference. These resources are excellent but conference recognises that we could achieve more with regards to raising awareness of these issues and taking action on them, if we include more nationally coordinated local campaigning. For example, if women's history month could be utilized each year to raise awareness of UNISON women's campaigns, especially between now and 2020 that would help women members enormously at a local level. Women members and branch women's officers would find it helpful to have access to 'campaign flowcharts', specific resources, contact lists, 'do's and don't's' of the chosen women's campaign and to have those circulated to regional women's committees for dissemination to branch women's officers and other branch activists, with planned simultaneous 'days of action' being organised across the country.

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Conference instructs the national women's committee to work with relevant UNISON committees and departments, regional women's committees and any other relevant internal or external agencies to;

- 1) Develop a new set of campaigning resources to include for example, a 'campaign flow chart', briefing sheet on how to make contact with and build relationships with local media and press, that can be tailored locally to meet the needs of specific women's campaigns.
- 2) To play a lead role in deciding on a specific campaign as determined by the campaigning priorities set by national women's conference.
- 3) To disseminate the relevant campaigning information for the specific campaign to regional women's committees, for further development and planning of activities to run during women's history month.

South East Region

8.1

Add at end of first para:

Research conducted by NatCen Social Research for UNISON in 2016 also shows the disproportionate impact of public spending cuts on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) women. A key finding of this research, in which nearly two thirds of the respondents were women, was that LGBT people face a double bind of having a greater reliance on public services due to the discrimination and prejudice they face, but that same prejudice leading to dedicated services being massively cut or closed as they are seen as less of a priority for public and charitable funding. Specialist mental health and support services are particularly affected. As one woman respondent quoted in the research report said 'There used to be a support group in my local area which was accessible. However, with the cuts to public funding, this isn't an option available to me. I feel more isolated and rely on the internet to connect to people'. Another woman said 'I had to choose between paying privately to treat my mental health and saving to provide a stable housing situation for myself, my partner and future family.'

Add new action point 4:

4) disseminate relevant research on women and public spending cuts, including the 2016 NatCen research on cuts and LGBT people and services, and use the findings in campaigns against the cuts.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

9. CUTS TO DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES

As cuts continue around the country one area which continues to suffer is the support for domestic abuse.

It is seen as an area to easily make cuts when in fact these are the very services which are saving women's lives.

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Leaving any relationship can be a difficult and challenging time, but imagine having to cope with leaving an emotionally or physically abusive partner. You don't want to put your own friends and family at risk by turning to them for support so where do you turn? For many women refuges are the only option- that or the streets, making them even more vulnerable. Women accessing refuges have stared into the face of death. It is their final option, and not a decision taken lightly, they will have suffered at the hands of their abuser for more than likely a significant period of time.

However despite the essential need for these services the Tory government once again chose to take advantage of the most vulnerable in society, slashing funding available. Refuges are often full to capacity, having turned dozens of women away.

According to the Crime survey for England and Wales since 2010 violent crimes against women has increased significantly following a previous downwards trend since 1994 showing exactly which way this government is moving.(1)

According to UK refuges Online (May 2016) There are 361 domestic abuse services in England run by 228 different organisations. 272 of these services include refuge services. An insignificant number when compared to the women who need to access them.(2)

Women's Aid highlight 92 women and their 75 children were turned away from the refuge services responding to their annual survey on just one day in 2015 because they could not be accommodated (data provided by 129 refuges)

In addition their survey highlighted 44% (72 services) of services responding to the Women's Aid Annual Survey 2015 were running an area of work without dedicated funding during the previous financial year (2)

Anyone of us could become a victim at anytime.

We ask the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link, regions and relevant organisations to:

- 1) Increase the awareness of the continued cuts to domestic abuse support services and the impact this has.
- 2) Work with regions and labour link to challenge the continued cuts to domestic abuse support services.
- 3) Encourage regional women's SOGs to engage with local domestic abuse services to increase awareness of the issues they face and the support UNISON can provide through networking.
- 4) Lobby government and MP's to create a dedicated domestic abuse support funding stream, which is appropriate for the level of need.

Northern Region

10. WHERE NEXT WITH THE HOUSING CRISIS FOR WOMEN?

This generation is facing a housing crisis that is supporting 'generation rent' and the 'boomerang' generation. The majority of young women, the low paid, and those on a

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fixed income (including disabled and/or retired women) are struggling to find acceptable and affordable housing as private rental costs continue to rise. Between 2014 – 15 (Guardian Jan 2016) rents in Bristol and Brighton increased by 18% and 8% in London whilst the national average increase was 4.9%. For many members affected by austerity, pay freezes and increasing living costs, the growth of rental charges is just not sustainable.

Some Private landlords are also not being held accountable for substandard accommodation because many people fear a complaint would result in eviction. Many are on short hold tenancies and in houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) that put women, especially young single parents, more at risk of financial exploitation.

The limited availability of social and council owned housing is a further area of concern. The waiting lists are long and are often allocated to Housing Associations. As a result women are forced to look for housing in the private sector, where there are less securities and higher rents.

Homelessness for those in work is also on the rise. The so-called “hidden homeless” are often young women in low to average paid jobs. They are in vulnerable situations as they depend on temporary arrangements “sofa surfing” with friends or relations. As private rents rise beyond what is affordable they often finally resort to HMO's, moving away from the area where they currently live.

Conference calls on the National Women's committee to work with the NEC and Labour link to :

- 1) Highlight the issues faced by women in private rented housing with Young , Black and Disabled members and report their findings back to Conference in 2018
- 2) Campaign for increased social housing and for all housing, including the private rented sector, to be of an acceptable standard
- 3) Support and promote the work of UNISON's There for you and Branch Welfare Officers to support women facing housing issues
- 4) Work with Young Members Forum and SOG's to produce campaigning materials

South West Region

10.1

Amend action point 2 to read

2. Campaign for increased social housing and an end of right to buy

Create new 3 to read

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3. Campaign for all housing, including the private rented sector, to be of an acceptable standard.

Renumber the remaining existing action points to follow on

Eastern Region

11. ABORTION RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

This Conference notes that women in Northern Ireland live under some of the most restrictive abortion legislation in Europe. They are denied access to abortion information, advice, and services that are available to women in the rest of the UK.

This Conference believes that these barriers to reproductive rights are a class issue and barriers to full social, economic, political and workplace equality in Northern Ireland.

This Conference supports the demand of Alliance for Choice, for free, safe, and legal abortion in Northern Ireland.

This Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to

- 1) continue to campaign for free, safe, and legal abortion information, advice, and services on an equal basis for women in Northern Ireland;
- 2) seek to work with Alliance for Choice and other campaigns in Northern Ireland which share our aims on abortion rights to examine what support it can offer to improve provision of existing abortion information and advice.

National Young Members' Forum

12. ABORTION RIGHTS 50 YEARS SINCE THE 1967 ACT

Conference notes that the 1967 Abortion Act will be 50 years old in 2017.

Prior to 1967 around 100,000 illegal abortions were carried out each year in Britain and it is estimated that 35,000 women were hospitalised each year due to botched back street abortions. No one really knows how many women actually died but one estimate is that 15% of all maternal deaths were a result of botched backstreet abortions.

The 1967 Abortion Act gave women limited access to safe abortions but that right has had to be defended many times since 1967 and our Trade Union movement has always been central to that defence. We recognise abortion is a class issue. Rich

women always have the money to access safe abortions it is working class women who died in the back streets and suffer disproportionately when abortion is restricted.

That the 1967 Abortion Act does not extend to Northern Ireland and that a woman was recently sentenced to prison (sentence suspended) for using the abortion pill purchased over the internet due to non-availability in Northern Ireland.

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In October 2016 women in Poland took to the streets in huge numbers to prevent the total banning of abortion in their country organising a 'women's strike' that tens of thousands took part in.

The fight for a woman's right to choose is a global fight.

Conference further notes the Abortions Rights Campaign (UK) will be actively celebrating the 50th anniversary and using the event to raise the profile of the Abortion Rights movement and campaign to extend the right to Abortion beyond the 1967 Act.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Publicise the anniversary events widely within our union
- 2) Encourage Regions, Branches, Branch Equality Officers to hold events, and
- 3) To promote the 50th anniversary of the Act and to raise the profile of the Abortion Rights Campaign (UK) in any way that they can.

Camden UNISON

13. PROPORTIONALITY

UNISON was formed in 1993 and at that time, proportionality was a radical and hotly contested inclusion within the rule book.

UNISON rules state:

2.12.2 "Proportionality" is the representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate.

UNISON women's membership is currently at 77% and rising, despite overall some membership losses due to the impact of austerity measures imposed by this tory government.

After more than 20 years, the question must be asked – how well have we done on achieving proportionality? Are all our delegations, branch committees, regional committees truly proportional?

Conference acknowledges the good work to date on developing mechanisms to assist in this work, for example reserved seats, and its scheme of branch representation at national conferences,

However, it is clear; women are still proportionally under represented within UNISON.

For example, according to the SERTUC annual survey, (Paddling furiously, published in March 2016), Unison's National Executive Council of 65 members is only 63% women (66% in the last survey in 2012) and The 2015 National Delegate Conference comprised 1,143 delegates (3,062 participants), only 65% of delegates were women.

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This report also states that Unison sent a delegation of 59 to the 2015 TUC Congress, of whom only 68% were women.

UNISON rules continue to define NEC seats by male and female, rather than general seats and female seats. This has the effect of reserving seats for men, ensuring that our NEC will never be truly proportional.

Achieving proportionality is not just the business of women's self organisation, it is the responsibility of all of us in UNISON. New strategies and initiatives need to be produced to enable us to really achieve and maintain proportionality.

The materials and training produced by UNISON so far have been excellent and there are many guides and leaflets that talk about self-organisation and include references to proportionality and fair representation.

In addition to these guides on self-organisation; it would be useful to provide very specific advice and guides for branches on proportionality and the steps a branch and region need to take to bring about change, remove barriers to participation and truly encourage women to take their rightful place in UNISON structures.

Conference therefore asks national women's committee to work with national SOG and YM groups, learning and organising services, membership participation unit and any other relevant committees and/or department to develop new strategies for really achieving proportionality which might include rule changes, training materials, guides and leaflets, training courses.

Eastern Region

13.1

Add at end of paragraph starting 'UNISON rules continue to define NEC seats by male and female...':

It also has the effect of excluding members who do not identify as male or female. Increasing numbers of our members identify outside the gender binary. UNISON structures, policies and procedures are being updated to accommodate this, including the membership records and conference systems. The national women's committee has agreed the implications of gender fluid identities for reserved women's seats. Conference welcomes discussions and workshops on this topic at women's conference and urges the national women's committee to continue this work. In particular, conference recognises the importance of considering this when looking at how to achieve proportionality for women in all of UNISON's structures.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

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13.2

Add new penultimate paragraph:

“Conference notes that a new proportionality toolkit has been designed, which addresses these issues. However, it is essential that this toolkit is made widely available if action is to be taken to address imbalances.”

In the last paragraph:

Delete all after “achieving proportionality which”, and replace with “includes raising awareness of the toolkit, and might include rule changes, training materials, courses and leaflets.”

National Women's Committee

14. GENDER WAGE GAP WIDENS FOR WOMEN WITH CHILDREN

A report published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies into the gender wage gap has found that women experience a gradual but continual rise in the gap once they have their first child.

The study also found, on average, that the hourly wages of female employees are currently about 18 per cent lower than men's. This means that overall the wage gap is on a downward (albeit slow) trajectory as women's wages were 23 per cent lower in 2003 and 28 per cent lower in 1993.

However, the wage gap is not static over the life cycle. For instance, the gap is relatively small or non-existent around the time of labour market entry and widens only slowly up to the mid 20s (and especially slowly for graduates).

The gap starts to open up around the late 20s and gets gradually wider over the next 20 years. This is because male wages continue to increase, especially for the highly-educated, while female wages flat line on average.

Figures produced by the study show that the gender wage gap widens dramatically in the years after the arrival of the first child. There is, on average, a wage gap of over 10 per cent even before the first child arrives, but this gap appears fairly stable until the child arrives and is small relative to what follows.

There is then a gradual but continual rise in the gap over the following 12 years, until it reaches a plateau of around 33 per cent. The authors also note that once the employment gap opens up after the arrival of the first child, it is persistent.

A big difference in employment rates between men and women also opens up on arrival of the first child and is highly persistent. By the time their first child is aged 20, women have on average been in paid work for four years less than men and have spent nine years less in paid work of more than 20 hours per week.

The research confirms that women continue to bear the cost of childcare by either taking time out to look after children or as a result of flexible working. If the Government is serious about tackling the gender pay gap it will need to ensure that the proposed gender pay gap regulations, which will require employers to publish

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gender pay information are sufficiently detailed to encourage employers to take action to address the causes of unequal pay.

This unequal pay caused through gender inequality will only become worse in these times of austerity.

This conference instructs the National Women's Committee:

- 1) to publicise these research findings within UNISON
- 2) increase awareness of the double disadvantage that the gender pay gap and austerity measures have on women

Eastern Region

14.1

Add new action point 3:

"3) Lobby and campaign for free, publicly funded and publicly provided, high quality universal childcare."

National Women's Committee

15. EQUAL PAY AND BLACK WOMEN

Conference as we all know the pay gap between men and women is widening, but it will come as no surprise that the pay gap for Black women is even greater.

37.6% of Black workers are in occupations which are traditionally low paid and dominated by women – cleaning, care work and catering, compared to 29.6% of white workers. These occupations are also among those most adversely impacted by the increase in the casualised workforce and the use of zero hour contracts, both of which drive down pay.

Conference welcomes the recent challenge by seventeen homecare workers employed across the London Borough of Haringey, and backed by UNISON, who are taking care company Sevacare and the council to court in a dispute involving illegal wages, over the widespread non-payment of the minimum wage.

The workers' zero-hours status means most have previously been too scared to complain about their treatment, conscious that if they did, they were likely to have their hours reduced, be given no work at all or victimized for complaining.

General Secretary Dave Prentis states that "The blame for the social care crisis must be laid at the government's door. Ministers must get tougher with enforcing the law so firms aren't able to cheat their staff. More money must be put into care so that councils are not forced to tender contracts at a price they know decent care cannot be delivered."

A 2014 National Audit Office report suggested that as many as 220,000 homecare workers may be being paid an illegal wage. Evidence suggests that national minimum/national living wage non-compliance is endemic across the social care sector.

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The idea behind a living wage is very simple: that a person should be paid enough to live decently and to adequately provide for their family. At its heart is an ethical argument for preventing in-work poverty and ensuring workers are not exploited through low wages.

As austerity hits even harder the pay gap for Black people and in particular Black women will continue to grow. It's a problem recognized by the Government, with Theresa May announcing an audit to tackle public sector racial disparities. The scheme will look into how race might affect how people are dealt with in areas such as work, education and the NHS. However, we don't need more data to tell us what we already know, that race does affect how people are treated within employment, that many hard working Black women are to be found on the lowest rung of the ladder. What is needed now is direct action to redress this inequality.

Conference calls upon:

- 1) The National Women's Committee (NWC) to work with the National Black members' Committee (NBMC) in conjunction with the NEC to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of low paid work on Black women;
- 2) The NWC to work with the NBMC to encourage regional representatives to work with their regional women's committees in raising awareness and campaigning on the issue;
- 3) The NWC to work with all appropriate bodies in UNISON to promote UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.

National Black Members' Committee

16. LACK OF BLACK WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN UNISON

More than 70% of UNISON members are women and UNISON is committed to fair representation and proportionality (Rule D1.4). However, in the public sector where many of our members are Black women, we see very few Black women represented at branch, regional and national level; despite statistics telling us that Black people are amongst those most likely to join a union.

In furtherance of the Rule Book aims of self-organisation, (D 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and 5.1.4) and in line with the union's aims and objectives; we acknowledge that further specific work can assist and encourage the participation of members who may feel marginalised. A high percentage of Black women members are working in health, social care and local government; many are low paid members. At a time when UKIP is promoting division in our communities, it is crucial that UNISON continues to lead the way in its view that diversity in our society adds value to us all.

The Freedom of Information requests carried out regionally in Local Authorities revealed that Black women are more likely to be selected for redundancy than their white counterparts; even though they are poorly reflected in number within the workforce (5% rather than 12% statistical expectation).

Work done regionally and in branches to promote the active involvement of women, especially Black women needs to be encouraged at a national level.

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We therefore call upon the National Women's Committee to work with National Black Members' Committee to:

- 1) work with the regions to encourage branches to do what they can to empower all Women (Black, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Disabled and young members) from all cultures and all religious backgrounds, to become activists and to become involved with their Self Organised Groups, to consider becoming stewards and increasing their participation in their Branch Committees and to become active in their regions and the wider union as a whole;
- 2) work with branches to actively encourage the inclusion of Black women (where appropriate) across the country and value their involvement and diversity.

National Black Members' Committee

17. YOUNG WOMEN MUST NOT SUFFER UNDER BREXIT

This Conference believes that the impact of Britain leaving the European Union has the potential to be extremely damaging for workers, and public service workers in particular.

This conference also believes that young women will be amongst those hardest hit as the scramble to establish trade deals will not only see an attack on crucial equality rights created through EU membership, but will also see a 'race to the bottom' on pay and conditions under the guise of 'efficiency', 'profitability', and 'flexibility'.

This conference further believes that public services that provide essential support for ourselves, our families, and our communities will be under greater threat than ever before as commitments to opening them up to further privatisation etc. is written into trade deals. This will also impact on jobs in the public services.

This conference notes that young women are already discriminated against and face barriers of institutional sexism that already affects their chances of finding work with decent pay and conditions. It is young workers who will have to live longest with the result of Britain's exit from the European Union, and suffer longest the consequences to their careers and their lives more widely.

This conference calls on the National Women's Committee to seek to work with the National Young Members Forum to ensure that young women's voices are heard and their interests properly represented in UNISON's call for the defence of working people's rights and the defence of public services in any negotiations around the British exit from the European Union.

National Young Members' Forum

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18. BREXIT- THE WOMEN'S VOICE

The impact of Brexit is still unclear. What must be argued for is that the voice of women is at the negotiating table. Women continue to be under-represented in Parliament and wider Civic Society. The impact of the Conservative Government's policies of austerity are having a disproportionate impact in the North East, and women continue to be particularly affected. With the vote to leave the EU it is imperative that women's priorities are taken into any post-Brexit plan. UNISON has a key role to play in promoting a post-Brexit vision of maintaining rights at work, and Equality legislation.

According to the 2011 census the UK had 63.182million people of which 32.153 million were female and 31.029 million were male

Workers, in particular female workers from other countries in the EU support our public services. They provide vital skills and knowledge to our NHS in particular and without these workers our NHS would struggle to fill posts, as they already do. These staff are already facing discrimination and racism following the Brexit vote, we already have staff looking to leave the UK as they no longer feel wanted or valued. We need to show these staff that the UK values their support and contribution, and

we should ensure that these workers are not treated differently or unfairly because of their country of origin.

We must ensure that there is absolutely no weakening of women's rights post Brexit, either directly or indirectly. Including but not limited to: Part time workers rights, Maternity rights, Equal pay, Health and safety and more.

Therefore we ask NWC to:

- 1) Work with regions and Labour Link to identify strategies that encourage participation of their women members in the political discussion around Brexit.
- 2) Work with Labour Link and regions to develop greater links with their MEP's and encourage members to engage in local opportunities around Brexit such as consultations.
- 3) Work with Labour Link and Regions to make Brexit discussions relevant to our women members.
- 4) Encourage the NEC to engage in the Fawcett society campaign #FaceHerFuture

Northern Region

19. IMPACT OF EU EXIT AND WOMEN

The exit of the UK from the EU has profound implications for women's rights. The implications were recognised in our debate at Women's Conference 2015 but have now become a reality.

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Some of the key policy areas where key equality law and related measures derived from EU membership include:

- women's rights and representation;
- employment
- police, justice and victims' rights;
- human rights;
- social security;
- disability;
- immigration and asylum.

All of these areas directly impact on women's lives and women's rights. We are now being asked to accept that the current UK Government will 'protect' these rights when there are clear indications to the contrary. The Human Rights Act remains under attack; the provisions of the ECHR are to be removed from the armed forces, setting a dangerous precedent for further regression; and the bedrock of anti-discrimination law and statutory duties on equality of opportunity are now under threat.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC and with relevant organisations to:

- 1) assess the impact of EU exit on our women members in particular and women's social and economic rights in general;
- 2) press the UK Government and the Devolved Governments to conduct equality impact assessments on the consequences of EU exit for women, particularly under the above headings and to make public their proposals for alternatives or mitigation where adverse impact on women is likely to occur;
- 3) press the UK government on how it intends to implement the outstanding CEDAW recommendations in the context of EU exit;
- 4) press the relevant equality and human rights enforcement bodies to conduct research and make proposals for the protections of women's rights;
- 5) work through the TU Council of Isles and the Women's Council of the Isles on a co-ordinated campaign to protect women's rights across all jurisdictions.

UNISON Northern Ireland

20. INCREASING DIVERSITY AT WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Conference notes that each year the attendance at national women's conference is monitored and reported to the committee and in the annual report.

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There is little significant change in the pattern of women attending, with disabled, LGBT and part time workers well represented amongst the delegation.

However, Black, young and low paid women are still under-represented, and many branches send no delegates or visitors at all to women's conference.

Conference acknowledges that there may be many reasons for this situation:

- Information may not reach women in branches who would be interested in attending;
- Women may "gatekeep", and opportunities to attend may not be offered to other women in the branch;
- Branches may choose not to prioritise attendance at women's (and other Self organised Group) conferences;
- Facility time may be an issue for women who might be interested in attending, but do not have leave or paid time off to attend;
- Women may be concerned about the cost of attending, particularly if branches limit subsistence or refuse to pay in advance;
- Where a branch is entitled to send one delegate, there may be issues with lack of confidence for that potential lone delegate;
- Branches in financial difficulty may choose not to send delegates, when there is no financial penalty for not doing so (unlike delegations to national delegate conference).

Conference further acknowledges that there may be many more reasons, and therefore calls upon the national women's committee to:

- 1) Conduct a survey of women activists and women's networks to establish why more women, and particularly women from under-represented groups, do not attend women's conference;
- 2) Work with the other self organised groups and young members' forum to identify particular barriers to attendance;
- 3) Report back to conference 2018 on the results and, based on these, develop an action plan to increase attendance and greater diversity at national women's conference.

National Women's Committee

21. PROTECTING THE RIGHT OF EU WOMEN WORKING IN SOCIAL CARE

On the 23rd of June, the country voted by a narrow margin of 52% to 48% to leave the EU. If we look at all the sectors that UNISON represent we will see women EU members working, and contributing having settled in Britain. With women making up 77% of UNISON's membership, it is not difficult to see that Brexit will have a disproportionate effect on our women EU migrant workers. There are approximately

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280,000 Migrants working in the UK care sector, from the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland, and Lichtenstein) who have the right to freedom of movement through their agreements with the EU, as well as citizens from all 28 EU countries. Predominately in the last few years many of our social care workers have come from Poland.

Many studies have shown that meeting the needs of our ageing population is one of the most serious challenges that we are facing in Britain. The increase in life expectancy has generated a surge in demand for care giving by the social care sector as family members support has declined over the years. In 2014 Skill for Care estimated that there were 1.45 million people working in social care, more than half employed in care homes, three quarters employed as direct care workers and four fifths are women. EU women can be found predominantly employed in the social care sector with only a small proportion of those having British citizenship. Social Care is already under threat from the brutal cuts imposed by the Tory government and one would have to ask how services would survive without our EU members working in those sectors. The CQC annual report shows that the number of hospital bed days lost through patients being unable to leave because social care was not available to allow them to be discharged safely soared from 108,482 in April 2012 to 184,199 in July this year – a 70% rise.

Despite the valuable service that social care workers provide in meeting the needs of vulnerable people it is regarded as an unattractive sector to work in. It has historically relied on women to fill the vacancies with many of our EU members mixing part time work and other caring responsibilities. Many have also been forced to take on additional jobs because of the unreliability of zero hours contracts. Traditionally social care is one of the lowest paid sectors of the labour market. Chronic difficulties in recruiting and retention of social care workers have led bodies such as the Care Quality Commission to emphasise that the employment conditions in those professions such as shift work and lack of career progression does not attract British born women. However the demand for social care continues to grow, and this has led social care providers to argue that they need to rely on migrant workers to continue to support vulnerable service users. The potential impact of a hard line towards EU members will decimate our public services putting more pressure on the NSH.

We are all too aware that our most vulnerable members of society are victim of the disintegration of the care sector due to the chronic underfunding of local authority budgets by central government. The services they are receiving would not function without the vital support provided by the women who fill vacancies in care and nursing homes, or in home care. A report published by Independent Age in 2016 found that 1 in 5 of the social care workforce were born outside of the UK which includes 150,000 working in care homes and 81,000 in domiciliary services. They further state that migrants from within the EEA have become the main group coming to the UK to work in social care and now make over 80% of all entrants. Their report also suggested that despite the arrival of migrant workers the adult social care sector in England faces a gap of 200,000 care workers by the end of this parliament. In these times of uncertainty one thing is sure, these services will not survive without these women coming from the EU countries.

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The recent rhetoric and despicable attacks against foreigners has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty for our women members. There has not been any clear indication of what post Brexit Britain will look like but the current government position is that curbing immigration is their priority. Many of our women members fear that they will be used as bargaining chips. There are a number of reasons why EU women members settled in Britain, because they fell in love with the diversity of nationalities, cultures, the freedom to express their sexual orientation, their feeling of being accepted for who they are, and because they want to contribute their skills. Many of our women members did not chose to work in social care just because it is a job but because they are caring and compassionate. Many of them have qualifications and experience and bring with them innovative ways and new perspectives in working with our vulnerable communities. We as a trade union have a long tradition of defending fair employment practices, better pay and conditions. We need to move away from the language of hate and xenophobia that the government and right wing media continues to propagates. Let's not forget that we are still part of the EU and freedom of movement is one of its founding principles. We as a trade union have a long tradition of standing up to racism and discrimination. Our social care system will fail our most vulnerable citizens if our EU sisters lose their right to remain in the country they have chosen to make their own. Let us rally behind them and give them our unconditional support.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee:

- 1) to work with the NEC to produce the union's materials in several different European languages and make them freely available online.
- 2) to investigate the options for setting up an in-house translation service to support our migrant worker members during the transition period as the UK leaves the EU.
- 3) Because women are disproportionately represented in low paid employment to campaign against the current government proposal of a minimum salary of £35,000 as a criterion for migrant workers to remain in the UK.
- 4) to work together with other trade unions to protest against holding EU migrant women workers to ransom for the government's own ends.

South East Region

22. THE TRADE UNION ACT AND THE GOVERNMENT'S AUSTERITY CUTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON DISABLED WOMEN

Conference notes that in June 2016 the United Nations (UN) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights found that the UK government's austerity measures and social security reforms were in breach of its obligations to human rights.

The report amongst other issues cites: an increase in the use of food banks, rising unemployment rates, the housing crisis and cuts to mental health care and states that women and particularly disabled women are disproportionately affected.

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The UN condemned the government's welfare reform including the effects of the 'bedroom tax'.

The UN committee stated it was 'seriously concerned' about 'the disproportionate adverse impact that austerity measures' have on disadvantaged and marginalised groups, specifically disabled women and low-income families.

The UN also expressed concerns over:

- 1) unemployment that disproportionately affects disabled women
- 2) the levels of part-time, temporary work and the use of zero hour contracts;
- 3) an insufficient national minimum wage, which disproportionately affects disabled people and women
- 4) violence against disabled women;
- 5) increased poverty experienced by disabled women;
- 6) restriction of access to justice;
- 7) significant rise in homelessness of disabled women;
- 8) access to health care due to cuts to mental health services.

These issues affect disabled women which we are actively campaigning on.

In addition the UN expressed concerns over the UK government's enactment of the Trade Union Act.

Being activists in our union without dedicated facility time impacts negatively on our disabled women who are already under increased pressure in the workplace.

The Trade Union Act's proposed reduction of facility time shows the lack of value placed on the work disabled women activists do and will create further barriers for them partaking in campaigning and awareness raising on improving disabled women's wellbeing. This work provides value for the wider workplace reducing sickness absences.

Conference calls on the National Women's committee to work with relevant structures of the union to:

- a) Campaign to protect the Equality Act
- b) Call for research and reports on equality to report disabled women's experiences;
- c) Promote activism within disabled and women's members networks

National Disabled Members Committee

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23. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS RIFE AT WORK

According to figures published by the TUC, 52 per cent of all women and nearly two thirds of women between the ages of 18 and 24 have experienced sexual harassment at work.

The study, "Still just a bit of banter?", which was carried out in conjunction with the Everyday Sexism Project, also found that:

- nearly one in three women have been the subject of unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature at work
- more than one in four women have been the subject of comments of a sexual nature about their body or clothes at work
- nearly a quarter of women have experienced unwanted touching
- a fifth of women have experienced unwanted verbal sexual advances at work
- around one in eight women have experienced unwanted sexual touching or attempts to kiss them at work.

In the vast majority of cases (88 per cent), the perpetrator was male, and nearly one in five women reported that the person was their line manager, or someone with direct authority over them.

The survey also found that around four out of five women who said they experienced sexual harassment at work did not tell their employer about what was happening in case it impacted negatively on their relationships at work or their career prospects. Others were just too embarrassed to talk about it or felt they would not be believed or taken seriously.

UNISON has a long and proud record of negotiating harassment and bullying policies, challenging harassment at work and working collaboratively with employers to eradicate harassment in the workplace. When these have failed, UNISON has been effective in pursuing cases to employment tribunals to gain recognition and compensation for our members who have been sexually harassed.

Despite all our efforts, sexual harassment remains an endemic problem within our workplaces.

This conference instructs the national women's committee to:

- 1) Support relevant campaigns and awareness raising about the endemic nature of sexual harassment;
- 2) Work with any relevant organisations to develop further guidance and information on sexual harassment and that encourages and supports women to challenge the inappropriate behaviour

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- 3) Work within UNISON to raise awareness of sexual harassment and to publicise our successes in challenging sexual harassment where appropriate

Eastern Region

24. OVEREXPOSED AND UNDERPREPARED

Conference welcomes the Inquiry and recently published Report on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools published by the government women's and equalities committee. The Inquiry came about following a number of surveys and reports that highlighted the shocking scale of incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools for example, YouGov research in 2010, Girl guiding, Everyday Sexism Project, End Violence Against Women and Girls and a BBC report in 2015.

The evidence gathered by the Inquiry shows that whilst both boys and girls can be affected, girls are experiencing concerning high levels of sexual harassment. The Inquiry looked into the scale of the problem, the causes and effects. Over a three year period to July 2015 5,500 sexual offences were reported to the police as having taken place in UK schools, including 600 rapes. This might equate to a rape in school every day of the school year. The scale of the problem is shocking and described by some as only the tip of the iceberg. Amongst the causes is the link to exposure to pornography from an incredibly young age (under 11). Another cause for the rise in schools of this behaviour is the response by teachers and schools who show both a complete lack of understanding but also an attitude in some schools of 'sweeping it under the carpet'.

Sex and relationship education (SRE) is compulsory from children over 11 years but provision is patchy and where it is provided it is not extensive and does not include awareness of the violent mainstream pornography that has become normalised in society and is facilitating the sexual harassment of girls in schools by boys. While softer sexualised media has become common place with programmes like Channel 4's 'Naked attraction' and reality TV programmes such as 'Sex on the beach' being aired weekly, children often freely get their first exposure to information about sex and relationships from this kind of media coverage, but more worryingly, internet porn via their phones and other computer devices. Although sex education is compulsory from the age of 11yrs onwards, this is often too late as children (mostly young boys) are being exposed to porn on the internet even younger than 11yrs (Culture Reframed).

The effect that this is having on school children and especially girls is lack of confidence, fearful of speaking up in class, frightened to go to school. Surveys show that 59% of girls and young women have faced some kind of sexual harassment in school or college. Almost a third have experience unwanted touching and jokes of a sexual nature are widespread and treated as just banter.

'All day, every day' is an excellent report produced by End Violence Against Women (EVAW) in September 2016 that very clearly demonstrate the legal responsibility on schools to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and violence against girls for example, under the Human Rights 1998, the Equality Act 2010. This combined with the findings of the Inquiry undertaken by the government women and equalities

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committee set very clear advice and recommendations to government which Conference believes should be acted upon without delay.

Conference congratulates UNISON on its continuing support and campaigning work on sexual harassment and violence to women and girls and instructs the national women's committee to work with Labour Link and relevant internal and external committees and agencies to;

- 1) Campaign and lobby government to implement the 38 recommendations from the Inquiry into sexual harassment and sexual violence in UK schools.
- 2) Lobby for compulsory age appropriate sex education at all levels of school, to include information about consent, respect, violence against women and the harms of pornography.
- 3) Support the work of Culture Reframed and work with them in their campaigning work to take a public health approach to educating young people about the harms of pornography

South East Region

25. WORKING WITH DEMENTIA

Conference notes that, according to the Alzheimer's Society, women are disproportionately affected by dementia:

- Over 500,000 people with dementia – 61% – are women
- Women in their 60s are almost twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease over the rest of their lives as they are to develop breast cancer
- Dementia is the leading cause of death for women in the UK, accounting for 12% of women's deaths in 2013
- Between 60 and 70% of all unpaid dementia carers are women, and women are more than twice as likely to provide intensive, 24-hour care than men
- Female carers report feeling less supported than their male counterparts

Further, as the state pension age has increased and women are being required to work longer, the impact on them – both as sufferers and as carers – is likely to increase.

For those with early onset dementia – more than 40,000 people aged under 65 in the UK – the situation is particularly complex, particularly as many of them will wish to continue to work after diagnosis. For the women acting as carers, the difficulties in combining their work and care responsibilities will be immense. Under half of carers report that their employers offer any support with their caring responsibilities, whilst 1 in 5 carers leave work or opt to work part time in order to cope.

Whilst the Equality Act (2010) requires employers to avoid discrimination and make reasonable adjustments to ensure people with dementia are not disadvantaged in the workplace, there is little guidance for branches on how best to support our

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members, both those with the diagnosis and those caring for partners or family members with dementia.

Conference welcomes the UNISON backed Dementia Awareness training which is now available, but believes more must be done to support our members.

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

- 1) Work with appropriate departments, including the Health and Safety Unit, Bargaining Support and Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to issue guidance to branches on supporting members with a diagnosis of dementia and those caring for sufferers;
- 2) Work with Alzheimer's Society in campaigning for an improved workplace and societal response to those suffering with dementia, and their carers, including the need for better long term planning for an ageing society which acknowledges that women can expect to live, on average, for 5 years more than men;
- 3) Continue to campaign and lobby the government for improved caring leave, flexible working rights and "adjustment leave" – a period of leave to allow time to resolve problems caused by a life changing event or illness for an individual or their dependants.
- 4) Easier access to welfare and benefits, particularly for women whose lifetime earnings and pensions will be lower than men's, due to the persistent gender pay gap.

National Women's Committee

26. WHY SICKLE CELL MATTERS

Sickle cell disease is the name for a group of inherited blood disorder that affect the red blood cells. The most serious type is called sickle cell anaemia. People with sickle cell disease produce unusually shaped red blood cells that can cause problems because they don't live as long as healthy blood cells and they can become stuck in blood vessels. Sickle haemoglobin gives up its oxygen to the tissues which stick together to form long rods inside the red blood cells making these rigid and 'sickle' shaped. By comparison, normal blood cells can bend and flex easily. Whilst Sickle Cell is more commonly associated with people with an African or Caribbean family background in the UK, awareness needs to be raised about how sickle cell disease also affects people of nationalities such as, South American, Middle Eastern, Easter Mediterranean and Asian origin.

Conference notes that whilst most people have heard of sickle cell disease, the majority of those will not really understand the disease and how it impacts on the lives of those with the disease. The UK Sickle Cell Society was commissioned in 2009 to develop a programme of education and outreach work on behalf of the NHS as it was clear that there was a lack of awareness of sickle cell and lots of stigma around the condition, particularly in communities who were most at risk of inheriting the disease.

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Sometimes people born with sickle cell disease experience problems from early childhood, although most children have few symptoms and lead normal lives most of the time. The main symptoms of the disease are painful episodes called sickle cell 'crisis', which can be very severe and can last up to a week. Some children can also experience delayed growth, are at increased risk of infection and anaemia which can cause tiredness and shortness of breath.

Women with sickle cell need to be considered as being at high risk during pregnancy. Being pregnant can result in a worsening of their chronic illness and the sickle cell illness can exacerbate complications during pregnancy and in extreme cases this can lead to loss of the foetus and/or the mother. Women with sickle cell are more prone to pain episodes during pregnancy, especially in the last few months of pregnancy. Pregnancy creates intense demands on a woman's body and the normal physiological changes of pregnancy and common complications such as anaemia can easily make the 'sickling' of the red blood cells worse. If the blood vessels become blocked by 'sickled' cells, body tissues may become deprived of oxygen and die. Even minor areas of damage in the placenta may reduce the amount of oxygen and nutrients available for the baby's growth in the womb. Other complications for women during pregnancy can include; urinary tract infection, pneumonia, gallbladder problem, gallstones, heart enlargement and heart failure due to anaemia. During pregnancy women are at higher risk of strokes, pulmonary complications, higher number of 'painful crisis' and infections. Women with sickle cell are also 25% more likely to miscarry, 13% more likely to be born premature. According to the 'Brent Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Centre', the maternal mortality rate in the UK among women with sickle cell disease is 5 per 1000 births compared to 0.06 per 1000 births in women without sickle cell disease.

Research has furthered the understanding of the impact of the presence of sickle cell disease in children. Caring for children with sickle cell can put a strain on all the family but conference notes that because women still bear most of the responsibility for family caring, this will have a disproportionate impact on the working life of the mother, especially considering that one or more children in one family might have sickle cell and need care during painful episodes.

Conference congratulates the national women's committee for the information on sickle cell disease and women in the UNISON Women's Health Packs. Conference believes that UNISON national women's committee could play a further vital role in raising awareness among our members of the disease and the impact on women during pregnancy and with regards to the implications arising from time off work for caring responsibilities.

Conference instructs the national women's committee to work with the National Black Members SOG, other relevant UNISON committees and/or departments and where appropriate external agencies such as the UK Sickle Cell Society, the UK National Health Service Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening Programme to;

- 1) Update the excellent UNISON Pregnancy Diary to include a section of advice and guidance for pregnant women with Sickle Cell disease

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- 2) Develop information session and resources that can be used in branches or regions to run sessions with women members to raise awareness and provide support for women members.
- 3) Work with regional women's committees to encourage local organisation of information sessions for women members that can be used for example, during women's history month

South East Region

27. DRESS CODE INQUIRY

This conference is pleased to know that the House of Commons is holding an inquiry into high heels and workplace dress codes, following a petition asking for the law to be changed attracted almost 150,000 signatures.

MPs on the Petitions and Women and Equalities Committees have already heard evidence from the person who started the petition, Nicola Thorpe, after she was sent home from work for refusing to wear high heels. As an agency worker, she was hired to do reception work for a company on behalf of PwC but when she turned up on her first day she was told that she had to wear a uniform consisting of a dress and high heels. She was given the dress but told that she had to go out and buy a pair of heels. If she refused, "there would be someone else who would be quite happy to take over the role". She refused and was sent home without pay.

The aim of the inquiry is to gain a clear understanding of what the current law says about this issue and how it is affecting people in the UK. It is unlikely that the inquiry will result in a change in the law as the Equality Act already provides some protection against unlawful sex discrimination. Already Fawcett Society, Stonewall, ACAS and the TUC have contributed evidence.

The government has responded to the petition and to the inquiry saying.

"Company dress codes must be reasonable and must make equivalent requirements for men and women. This is the law and employers must abide by it.

This Government is taking action to remove the barriers to equality for women at work, which is why we are tackling the gender pay gap, increasing the number of women on boards, increasing support for childcare costs and ensuring employers are aware of their obligations to pregnant women.

Employers are entitled to set dress codes for their workforce but the law is clear that these dress codes must be reasonable. That includes any differences between the nature of rules for male and female employees, otherwise the company may be breaking the law. Employers should not be discriminating against women in what they require them to wear.

The Government takes this issue very seriously and will continue to work hard to ensure women are not discriminated in the workplace by outdated attitudes and practices".

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In order to assist the government continue this work, this conference instructs the national women's committee to:

- 1) Contribute to the inquiry, giving examples and where possible, the testimony of our women members.
- 2) Actively encourage all our women members who are obliged to wear employer imposed uniforms to submit their experiences and uniform mishaps and discrimination experiences to the inquiry.
- 3) Encourage women activists to examine their own employers' dress codes to identify 'outdated attitudes and practices' which are potentially sex discrimination and raise these issues within their branches and their collective bargaining structures.

Eastern Region

28. MODERN SLAVERY - CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

There is no one face of modern slavery. Victims are mostly women, and children of all ages, and cut across populations, but it is normally more prevalent among minorities and excluded groups. Many women in modern slavery are brought to the UK, but latest figures show that UK nationals are also being targeted.

Vulnerable young girls and women are drawn into slavery by traffickers and groomers often on the promise of paid work, or getting rid of their own or their family's debts, or in the case of vulnerable young women, the promise of attention and emotional support.

However, once involved they may find that the "work" is in the sex industry, often prostitution, where they are compelled to engage in non-consensual, often abusive sexual acts, working for no or little pay, for long hours, and with little or no thought about protection of their health or safety.

Another area of concern is the position of live in domestic workers, often from overseas, who may be subjected to physical and verbal abuse, imprisonment within their employers' home, denial of access to telephones/internet, and removal of their passports to prevent escape. Such women are often forced to sleep in kitchens or cellars, not allowed to mix with other people, and may also be subject to sexual abuse by family members. These women may also be denied access to healthcare, even for serious illnesses.

We may all see women who are enslaved in our day to day work. It may be hard to recognise slavery in the UK, but here are some common signs which you can be aware of:

- 1) Physical appearance – women may show signs of physical injury, or psychological abuse, may be underweight, malnourished, unkempt, or appear withdrawn.

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- 2) Isolation - victims may have restrictions placed on going places alone, only go out under the control of others, rarely interact, or appear unfamiliar with the area where they work.
- 3) Poor Living Conditions – Victims may be living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded conditions, often in the same area where they work.
- 4) Deprivation – may have few or no personal possessions, no ID or travel documents, or always wear the same clothes, which may not be suitable for the climate or the area where they work.

There are other signs as well, but these are among the most obvious.

- a) Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the LAOS to design training for activists and members to recognise potential signs of victims of modern slavery, and what to do if they suspect a client, patient or colleague is a victim. This to include production of publicity materials to be available for branches.
- b) To work with Labour Link to progress this through the Labour party and have this put on the national political agenda.
- c) To ask the NWC and NEC to pursue affiliation to a suitable anti-slavery organisation such as the Anti-Slavery Society or other such groups.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

29. SAFE TRAVEL

Safe travel for women

Conference will be aware that there has been some discussion regarding safe travel for women in the past year, in particular there have been concerns about the removal of train guards on some journeys placing females at an increased risk of unwanted attention and in more serious cases physical and sexual assault.

Since the EU referendum the number of xenophobic incidents has risen, this puts our most vulnerable women at risk of abuse

British transport police recorded that in the period of 2013/2014 the number of sexual offences against females was 624, this rose to 847 – a rise of 36% in 2014/15 as opposed to sexual offences against males which has decreased from 42 down to 37- a 12% reduction with 2016 figures to be announced at time of writing the motion (1)

Conference, we are also concerned that lone women travellers are more open to unwanted attention by some male travellers.

There are two sides to the argument of segregation.

- 1) Women should not be forced into women only carriages

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- 2) That a women's decision for segregation is a personal choice that should be given

This issue is not something new and women only travel has been adopted in many countries throughout the world including Mexico, Egypt, India and many more with mixed success

Conference, women's safety continues to be a matter of concern

This conference asks the national women's committee to:

- a) Carry out surveys by liaising with regions to identify whether women only travel is an issue for our members and if it is a subject UNISON should be campaigning for.

South Tyneside Local Government

29.1

Insert new paragraph 2

"Conference notes that the Rail Safety Standards Board, commenting on the long-running dispute at Southern Railway, has highlighted that the changes to guards' duties which management wants to impose are more about profit than enhanced passenger safety. It is believed that their motivation is to halve its staffing costs for those roles, and to reduce the amount of staff training it provides by two-thirds. Such measures – not only on Southern Railway but throughout the rail industry - will increase the risk to passengers, particularly the most vulnerable women; and increase women's perception of risk which leads to calls for extreme measures such as segregated travel."

Before bullet point 1, amend the sentence to read:

"There are many sides to the argument of segregation, including:"

Add new point 3

"3) That a transport system which prioritises passenger safety over profits would negate the need for any consideration of segregated travel, which many would perceive as a retrograde step."

Add new action point (b)

"b) Work with the NEC, Labour Link and the TUC women's committee, to lobby and campaign against cuts in railway staffing and for the prioritisation of passenger safety."

National Women's Committee

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30. DRIVER ONLY TRAINS DENY ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT FOR DISABLED WOMEN

Conference picture this, a female wheelchair user gets on a train at a station and has assistance to enter the train. Platform staff get the ramps and the woman disabled customer is helped onto the train.

The train has only a driver and no conductor. Then when getting to the station to get off the train, due to everything now being automated, ticket machine and no staff, who is there to help the disabled woman off the train?

The answer no one.

So the choice is to have a couple of steps down off the train to launch yourself and your wheelchair down to get off the train by yourself,

Or

Don't travel. This may mean that employment is not possible as you can't travel to and from a place of work.

Public transport is really important to everyone as is safe and accessible travel. This scenario also applies to tube travel as well as trains. A possible solution may be to have a conductor on every train or tube to ensure safety and access to the carriage is possible.

It may also mean that a staffed ticket office is needed so that women with a visual impairment, deaf women and women with other disabilities who are not able to use a ticket machine will not be excluded from public travel.

Conference we need to make our voice heard and work to curb the cuts to safety and accessibility on trains, tubes and other forms of public transport.

In addition, the duties of train guards and station staff include ensuring that passengers are kept safe. When stations are left unstaffed, disabled women and deaf women are placed in a more vulnerable situation as attacks on women and disability hate crime are increasing.

Since the UK voted to leave the European Union there has been a marked increase in race and gender discrimination, hate crime and violence against women in public places is being reported too often. This highlights the need for safe and accessible travel for women.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with TUC disabled workers committee, STUC Women's Committee, STUC Disabled Workers Committee, UNISON's Self Organised Committees, WTUC Women's Committee, Labour Link and other relevant bodies to raise these issues and campaign to secure accessible and safe train and tube transport for disabled women.

National Disabled Members Committee

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31. BUS SERVICES IN CRISIS

Conference is concerned at the continuation of Britain's bus services being depleted and congratulates Unison for supporting Campaign for Better Transport in their campaigning efforts to improve Britain's public transport services and applauds the support from the General Political Fund for research into this subject.

Buses are the most flexible form of public transport – yet they receive far lower subsidies than rail services do. Bus services are being cut and disappearing at an alarming rate but because millionaire cabinet members have probably never caught one in their lives, buses are not afforded the importance that they should receive.

Buses are statistically used more by women than men –

Women are responsible for more care work in the family so take children and dependent adults for medical appointments:

- Take children to/from school
- Shop
- Socialise
- College for personal or career development
- work

Conference is disappointed that the Buses Bill, due to be passed February 2017 does nothing definite to halt these service cuts.

This is leading to:

- 1) increased social isolation amongst poorer and older women (with the danger of increased mental health issues),
- 2) Pollution through congestion as more and more cars are on the road in turn impacting on the health of women and children
- 3) Less choice and integration of services for women public transport users.

All linked in with an ever worsening image of bus travel.

Conference supports the Unison position that Transport should be under public control to provide a sustainable, green, integrated affordable service for all.

Bus travel should not be the Cinderella service of Transport at the mercy of how much an authority wants or can afford to spend on services to keep rural, evening and weekend services.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to work with appropriate bodies within and outside Unison to campaign for decent bus services regardless of

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postcode and more government funding (to the equivalent spent on rail travel) to keep these vital links for women and their families.

West Midlands Region

32. THE STATE OF GIRLS' RIGHTS IN THE UK

This conference notes the recent outcomes of research conducted by Plan UK into the state of girl's rights in the UK.

This research identified that despite being the 5th richest country in the world the UK is failing to meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in turn is failing girls in this country.

The research identified

- 1) One in five women (22%) in the UK reported some experience of sexual touching, groping , flashing, sexual assault or rape whilst they were in around school
- 2) Reports of sexual offences in the UK have more than doubled in recent years to an average of 10 per school day.
- 3) Two thirds of reported sexual offences on school premises are girls or women.

Furthermore the research discovered that a girl's location is critical to whether she might enjoy her rights based on life expectancy, child poverty, reproductive health and educational outcomes.

The research recognised that we rarely talk about girl's rights and this is crucial if we are going to achieve SDGs for girls and young women regardless of where they live in the world.

These conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with other relevant UNISON bodies to campaign for girl's rights including:

- a) Lobbying policy makers to listen to girls and young women
- b) Challenge root causes of gender inequality wherever they exist
- c) Seeking to make SDGs as relevant here as we argue they should be elsewhere in the world.

West Midlands Region

33. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Conference notes that in 2011, as the result of youth advocacy around the world, the United Nations declared October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child. Its mission is "to help galvanize worldwide enthusiasm for goals to better girls' lives, providing an opportunity for them to show leadership and reach their full potential."

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International Day of the Girl Child is a day when activist groups come together under the same goal to highlight, discuss, and take action to advance rights and opportunities for girls everywhere. The day gives people and organizations the opportunity to raise public awareness of the different types of discrimination and abuse that many girls around the world suffer from. On this day, many community and political leaders talk to the public about the importance of girls' rights to equal education and their fundamental freedoms. Various events are held to showcase the work that people are doing to empower girls through active support and engagement with parents, families, and the wider community.

However, Conference notes that this day is not widely publicised within the union or the organisations we work in.

To address this and to highlight the day and the work done by the UN and other organisations Conference calls on the NWC to:

- 1) Work with other relevant bodies such as UNISON international committee and SOG's to raise awareness of the day.
- 2) Consider inviting a speaker to the National Women's Conference 2018, to highlight the work that has been done to raise awareness of the different forms of discrimination and abuse faced by girls around the world.
- 3) Work to be part of the 2018 celebrations in London

West Yorkshire Transport

34. ISTANBUL CONVENTION - VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Conference notes that on 7 April 2011, the Council of Europe adopted the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and it was opened for signatures by member states on 11 May 2011. It entered into force on 1 April 2014.

The Istanbul Convention was drafted in response to the growing recognition in the early years of the 21st century that member states had vastly differing approaches to matters of domestic violence and violence against women. The document sets out a legal framework for protecting women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence.

The UK government signed the Istanbul Convention on 8 June 2012 but has not yet ratified it and progress has stalled.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link and relevant organisations such as IC Change to:

- 1) lobby the UK government and all parties to take action to overcome the remaining obstacles to full ratification
- 2) work within UNISON structures to campaign for full ratification

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South West Region

35. ISTANBUL CONVENTION RATIFICATION

Conference notes:

- 1) that on 7 April 2011, the Council of Europe adopted the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and it was opened for signatures by member states on 11 May 2011. It entered into force on 1 April 2014.

The purposes of this Convention are to:

- a) protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;
 - b) contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;
 - c) design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
 - d) promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;
 - e) provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.
- 2) that the Istanbul Convention was drafted in response to the growing recognition in the early years of the 21st century that Council of Europe member states had vastly differing approaches to matters of domestic violence and violence against women. The convention sets out a legal framework for protecting women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence.
 - 3) that the UK government signed the Istanbul Convention on 8 June 2012 but has not yet ratified it and progress has stalled.

Conference believes:

- i) that the Council of Europe is right in recognising that women and girls are affected by gender-based violence to a far greater degree than men and that the violence they suffer 'constitute[s] a serious violation of the human rights of women and girls and a major obstacle to the achievement of equality between women and men'.
- ii) that UNISON should support ratification of the Istanbul Convention in line with its trade union principles of equality and the rights of all people to live with dignity and respect.

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Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link and relevant organisations such as IC Change to:

- 1.1 lobby the UK government and all parties to take action to overcome the remaining obstacles to full ratification of the Istanbul Convention
- 1.2 work within UNISON structures to campaign for full ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

University Of West Of England

36. STANDING TOGETHER TO SAY NO PLACE FOR HATE

Conference believes that all forms of hate crime are abhorrent.

Conference notes that following the toxic debate on EU membership last year, reported hate crime increased. The spike in hate crime against those perceived to be migrants or asylum seekers is well documented.

Conference further notes the findings of the latest hate crime report by LGBT anti-violence charity Galop, published in October 2016, which shows a less anticipated spike in homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime around the time of the referendum. Attacks rose 147% in the three months after the vote. Levels of disability hate crime are also intolerable: the Equality and Human Rights Commission has a programme of work to tackle it.

Conference welcomes developments in addressing misogyny as a hate crime, with Nottinghamshire Police becoming the first force in the country to recognise and record it as such. It applies to a range of incidents reported to the police, from street harassment through to physical intrusions on women's space. It is defined as 'Incidents against women that are motivated by an attitude of a man towards a woman and includes behaviour targeted towards a woman by men simply because they are a woman.' It does not change the offence but the misogyny category acts as a flag or 'qualifier' on the incident log. For example an incident of anti-social behaviour would become anti-social behaviour with a 'misogyny hate crime qualifier'.

Conference is concerned, however, that hate crimes are still likely to go unreported and unrecorded and there have historically been low levels of prosecution. This is made worse by cuts to hate crime advice and support services.

Further, despite years of campaigning, the five recognised strands of hate crime are not equally protected in law in either England and Wales or Scotland, for both the aggravated offences and the stirring up of hatred offences. The highest prison sentence a court can give for homophobic, biphobic, transphobic assault is six months, while there is a maximum sentence of two years for race and faith assaults. Disparities in law and sentencing policy suggest a 'hierarchy of hate crime' that undermines confidence.

Finally, conference welcomes UNISON's campaign on standing together against hate and challenging prejudice, which encourages us all to start workplace

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conversations on stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, helping to build trust, respect and solidarity.

Conference calls on the national women's committee to:

- 1) Raise awareness of the seriousness of hate incidences and encourage women to report them, either directly to the police or via third party reporting such as the True Vision website;
- 2) Publicise Nottinghamshire police's work on tackling misogynistic hate crime, calling for this to be taken up by other police services;
- 3) Publicise and support the development of National Hate Crime Awareness Week #NHCAW, which takes place in October, across the UK;
- 4) Continue to campaign for levelling up of all hate crime protections, noting that women can experience any type of hate incident, and for adequate funding of hate crime services;
- 5) Publicise and promote UNISON's campaign materials on standing together and challenging prejudice, and resources for branches on tackling hate crime in the workplace.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

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EMERGENCY MOTION RULED OUT OF ORDER

NOT COMPETENT

CHILD MARRIAGE IS CHILD LABOUR

Conference notes that on 19 September 2016 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) launched the Alliance 8.7, an initiative which will bring together all interested parties to join forces in achieving UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development target 8.7, aiming at a world without forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour.

Conference welcomes the initiative, which it is anticipated will also address other sustainable development goals, including gender equality.

However, conference is concerned to note that whilst child labour is included in the target, the ILO does not include child marriage within its definition of child labour.

In the next year, an estimated 15 million girls will be forced into “marriages.” Instead of receiving an education alongside their peers, child “wives,” are forced to work long hours cooking and cleaning. They work night shifts caring for babies and younger children. Under the control of older “husbands” they are physically and psychologically abused and raped repeatedly. They work in conditions that threaten their lives and their health, suffer human rights and labour violations on a daily basis, and many die as a result.

If these activities were performed in a third-party household, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) would count them as work, and they would be included in child labour statistics, and in international action to end child labour. But because the children are illegally married, the ILO regards their workplace as their valid household and excludes them.

Child “marriage” is not merely a harmful traditional practice: it is a crime; it is child labour in its worst form, and a complete violation of a girl’s human rights.

Conference believes that “child marriage” should be included amongst the worst forms of child labour as defined by the ILO core convention 182, Worst forms of child labour.

Conference calls upon national women’s committee to work with the NEC, international committee and the TUC to urge the ILO to take a principled stance, to treat child marriage as one of the worst forms of child labour under ILO core convention 182 and for governments to provide the resources for proper monitoring and implementation of the convention.

National Women's Committee