
2017 Community Conference

Annual Report 2017

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Introduction

On behalf of the Service Group Executive, I would like to welcome you all to the 2017 Community Seminar and Conference. Over the next few days we can debate the issues which matter most to our members, and take the opportunity to catch up with comrades across the country.

In the throes of a right-wing Conservative Government, with workers' rights being ignored, weakened or abused by employers and ministers, and with these problems being particularly acute in Community, it is easy to be dispirited. But I am coming to conference this year in a positive frame of mind. I can see all the fantastic work that our union is doing for members and I *know* we are making a difference. It is a message we deliver often, but it doesn't make it any less true: When times are hard, that's when our members need us most.

In this annual report you will find many examples of the change that UNISON is bringing to the Community sector. Organising projects which are building our power in sometimes hostile employers. Campaigns which will boost wages and working conditions for thousands of people. Negotiating victories which demonstrate that a unionised workplace produces better outcomes for service users and workers.

My message to you ahead of this conference and seminar is two-fold.

Firstly, enjoy yourself. Enjoy coming together with people who are achieving great things in very difficult circumstances. Enjoy the debates over crucial issues and enjoy the social side of conference, where you can develop contacts and comradeship which will help you in your work for UNISON.

Secondly, I hope you will leave conference with a renewed sense of purpose and belief that you are doing the right thing. Trade unions are one of the few organisations in civil society that bring working people together and gives them a voice. That should never be underestimated or taken for granted.

See you in Bournemouth!

Kevin Jackson, Chair, Community Service Group Executive

Recruiting, organising, representing and retaining members

As a service group we have prioritised organising, because increasing our membership, and the density of our membership in employers is the fundamental building block for negotiating better terms and conditions and exerting influence.

Membership has remained stable, fluctuating a little over the last 12 months. Overall Community membership stands at 66,422 at the time of writing. Many of these are new members, some have TUPE transferred from other employers. We have also lost many members despite having 12,550 new joiners in the last year. This is a reminder to all levels of our service group of the need to maintain consistent communication with members, updating them and involving them in the work of the union.

For the union to remain strong in Community we need to ensure workers are organised. Innovative approaches can be seen across the country. In London, the Community and Voluntary Organisations branch has taken an organising approach and introduced in-house training in the form of monthly Steward Network meetings, which has resulted in increased numbers of active stewards and recognition agreements with various employers. In the East Midlands, the Community Sector established a Regional Project Board to steer the work of Fighting Fund Organisers and increase local capacity for organising and supporting members, alongside current arrangements in branches. One crucial initiative in the North West is the Social Care Campaign “Care Workers for Change” running across the Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region Devolution areas. This wide-ranging strategic campaign contains a strong organising and recruitment element.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that, as a service group there is a continuing issue which we must keep grappling with. Many Community members and activists are still not fully integrated into their branches, sometimes when the branch is more focussed on a single, larger public sector employer. Community Members must feel that they can access support and advice from their branch. This issue should continue to receive due attention in the coming year.

Housing Associations Organising Project

Following on from the Fighting Fund Project in Anchor, Sanctuary, and Places for People, we have developed a new organising project in the Housing Association Clarion. Clarion is now one of the largest housing associations in Europe and was formed in November 2016 out of a merger between Affinity Sutton and Circle Housing.

This project aims to develop our organisation in Clarion. Our national Fighting Fund organisers have been working hard, with regions and branches to this end.

The situation within Clarion has been complicated by the hostile approach taken by Clarion management to trade union recognition. They have sought to derecognise our members who previously enjoyed good industrial relations within Circle. It has only been a concerted campaign by our members which has delayed this. At the time of writing the campaign, our organising work and our negotiations with the employer continue.

Negotiating on behalf of members and promoting equality

The context for bargaining over the past year has been difficult. Continued reductions in grant funding and public service contracts have squeezed the finances of many employers.

UNISON has been working hard to prevent cuts to wages and working conditions as being seen as the 'easy option' for reducing costs. We have negotiated hard across the country for pay rises or to prevent pay cuts and the erosion working conditions, removal of increments, and under-staffing.

We are seeing more employers sign up to the Living Wage under pressure from UNISON.

Some charities are starting to recognise that pay freezes are simply unsustainable and will lead to their staff leaving for other employers and other sectors. 1% pay rises have been common, influenced by the strong case unison has made in negotiations.

The average 2016 pay rises according to various sources were:

XpertHR Not-for-profit 1%
LRD Voluntary sector 1%
Incomes Data Research Not-for-profit 1.5%
Incomes Data Research Care services and housing 1%

The service group has consciously attempted to address equality issues, including ensuring that women are properly represented. In 2017 we will be seeking to pursue equal pay across the sector, and ensure that we are applying proportionality and fair representation in our own work.

Target employers

Action for Children

A new recognition agreement was signed with Action for Children on 1st December. Following almost four years of negotiations, UNITE, UNISON and Action For Children agreed the recognition deal at our August negotiating meeting. The agreement updates many out-dated elements of the previous agreement. It also guarantees that members will have their voices heard across the range of organisational and employment issues.

As part of this, we also reached agreement on the roles for organisers. For some time there have been the equivalent of 2 full time posts allocated to union roles. (1.5 to UNITE and 0.5 to UNISON. UNITE holding the union co-ordinator post). We have now secured the allocation of the same resource, but there will be a redistribution between the unions. UNISON will have 1 full time post and so will UNITE. Elections for the new posts will be held in early 2017.

89% of members voted to accept the pay offer of a consolidated pay rise of 1% for all staff, and for those claiming for mileage, an extension of the upper limit for claiming 40p per mile to 9,000 miles from 6499 miles and a commitment to the improved management of TOIL.

The pay and grading project had continued apace, with strong influence from UNISON. We have agreed general principles of the change process, including nobody having pay

reduced. Our AfC reps has been doing great work ensuring that UNISON members have been represented during on the details of proposals.

It is important to record our sincere thanks and appreciation to Gill Dale who has been UNISON organiser in Action for Children over recent years. Gill's substantive role was transferred out of the organisation in January 2017 which has meant she has been forced to stand down. Gill has been a brilliant organiser and representative for our members and she will be missed among Action for Children Members. Thank you to Gill.

RNIB

A ballot on TU recognition to cover Action for Blind People was held in November and December 2016. During this process UNISON attended staff consultation meetings in Bristol, Leeds, Birmingham and London. The ballot of over 400 staff required a majority to vote for recognition to be extended and the result, when it came in December, was a positive one.

At the time of writing the trade unions are consulting members over a pay claim and negotiations will continue in early 2017.

Dimensions

There was a pay rise for some staff that fell below the market rate in some areas taking them up to at least the national living wage. The total number benefitting was around 600.

Dimensions has also taken on a large chunk of business from Somerset County council which equates to about 1200 staff, 800 of whom are currently UNISON members. UNISON have been consulted to varying degrees throughout the stages of tendering through to the final takeover which starts on 1st April this year. This will be under the auspices of a social enterprise board.

In November 2016 Dimensions conceded that time spent sleeping in at a specified location now counted at working time for the purposes of calculating the National Minimum Wage. This means that Dimensions staff should benefit from higher rates of pay for these sleep in periods, subject to a negotiated settlement.

UNISON continues to have regular meetings with executive team meetings through the National Staff Forum and the Joint negotiating committee. There are 13 operational areas throughout the country with a rep from each of these areas.

Dimensions have also committed to pay the National living wage to all staff including under 25s.

Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members

We should start out this section by noting the growing success of a long-term campaign in this service group. As noted above, more and more employers are now recognising that sleep-in time is working time for the purposes of calculating the national minimum wage. Slowly but surely, we are breaking an industry practice which we always said was wrong.

Improving sick pay schemes, delivering the real Living Wage and preventing violence at work have been at the heart of our national campaigning work. We are already starting to engage with national employers over the idea for a 'Safety at Work Charter' which will set minimum standards to prevent workers in community being victims of violence at work. The 2016 members survey made it clear that this is an acute problem in Community and it needs to be addressed. Watch out for this campaign to be rolled out in 2017.

Employers are also slowly waking up to the fact that paying a real Living Wage is the right thing to do, both for low paid workers and for service users. UNISON has recognised that delivering it is not easy in the current financial climate, but when it has been introduced it has delivered undeniable benefits. Movement on this issue employer 'Together' and in Dimensions are examples of this.

In Scotland, following the successful campaign for all care workers to be paid the Scottish Living Wage of £8.25 per hour UNISON is now working hard to see this implemented. See the report from Scotland below for more information on this.

There have been innovative campaigns across the country. One example is Cymru/Wales' Christmas Postcard Campaign to show public support for workers in the third sector which was promoted in high streets and across workplaces. An open letter was sent to Welsh newspapers from UNISON and chief executives of key third sector organisations in Wales, which was published in the Western Mail and local papers.

In December 2016, UNISON held a key meeting in Westminster with the new Shadow Minister for Civil Society where we raised a number of issues including funding for social care, minimum wage compliance, sick pay schemes and violence at work. Our co-operative work with the Shadow Minister is progressing well.

Our social media work - including a Twitter feed (@UNISONCommVol), Facebook page (UNISONCommVol), and activists' email list (join by emailing cvsector@unison.co.uk) – has continued to grow and has kept branches, activists and others informed.

Developing an efficient and effective union

The service group executive has continued to meet regularly and has progressed work throughout the year. In June 2016, Gavin Edwards was appointed UNISON's National Officer for Community, following Simon Watson's move to a new role in UNISON. Simon's exemplary work at National Officer for Community has been greatly appreciated.

The take up of positions on the service group executive greatly improved following a set of by-elections in 2016.

The Service Group's 'major charities' sector committee is also up and running, bringing together our leading lay activists in key employers to examine common issues and coordinate our response. The other sector committees – Housing Associations and Community and Voluntary Organisations – have not met outside of Community conference due to low nominations from regions. In part, this is related to a very high turnover of regional heads of Community, but with this settling down the sectors should improve in 2016.

Regional Reports

Cymru/Wales

This year has seen more attempts to cut to terms and conditions in the charitable and voluntary sector as a response to increases in the National Living Wage. This has meant many negotiations with employers, where possible sick pay, annual leave and enhancements have been defended. As a response the Cymru Wales Community Service Group has started a campaign to instigate an enquiry into the funding of the sector by the Welsh Government.

This began with a Christmas Postcard Campaign to show public support for workers in the third sector which was promoted in high streets and across public sector workplaces. An open letter was sent to Welsh newspapers from UNISON and chief executives of key third sector organisations in Wales, which was published in the Western Mail and local papers. Activist Phil Warlow responded from an employee perspective and this was also published. This is being followed up by lobbying with the Welsh Government and prospective candidates for the Local Government elections in May.

In October, at the overnight forum for the service group, it was agreed to communicate more regularly with CSG members in Wales through regular bulletins and also to organise a Housing Sector conference to attract an audience of staff working in housing but also students looking at working in the Housing sector as future young members. There is also a developing Youth and Community work group in the region, the regional CSG will play a key role in developing this.

Mental Health is a key theme in Cymru Wales and through links with the Disabled Members' SOG a course was run for Community members in Mental Health First Aid, the next stage will be training mental health champions in Community Workplaces.

Eastern

The Eastern Region has continued focus on ways in which to better support and organise our members and activists within the Community and Voluntary Sector.

This year has seen some leaps in the organisation of our members in this area with community sector members clustered in host branches throughout the region.

In some counties, there is a move towards resource centres, providing a resource centre hub to better support and organise these members. In Essex, a new branch has been formed to meet the challenge of organising members in the community service group.

Branches have risen to the challenge of organising and supporting our community members with several branches employing organisers specifically to organise and support members in community employers. Our key activists are working with branches to better facilitate community member involvement within the branch structures and the wider union by building appropriate branch structures.

This year has seen organising challenges in national employers which has provided an opportunity for branches, organisers, and activists within our region to work together and share ideas and approaches to organising.

New recognition agreements have been negotiated with employers within the region, as well as pay increase for some of our members.

We've continued to encourage activist education and training and support to support new activists in this sector.

Our region is seeing a growing number of trained and experienced activists effectively organising their workplaces and winning pay increases for our members, organising for recognition, and challenging their employers.

East Midlands

There has been an increase in activity in the last year in the East Midlands. We have been successful in achieving full funding from the Fighting Fund for 2 successive years for Fighting Fund workers.

These have been two individuals each in a 12 month term. One AO whose term ended in Sept 2016 and this was continued with a LO.

To increase activity and participation from Regional Members and to support wider branch engagement in the Community Sector we established a Regional Project Board to look at how we can steer the work of a dedicated FFO and increase local capacity for organising and supporting members alongside current arrangements in branches.

The project board comprised of Community Sector members and Branch Officers from across service groups. They agreed to focus on target employers.

Mencap

There has been limited activity in this employer in the Region. There has been a limited number of representatives to engage. The focus has been on raising the local profile of UNISON. Following the national survey of members on sleep ins, East Midlands had a high proportion of responses so follow up work is taking place to call each member and gather data as part of the national claim.

44 members recruited Sept 2015 – Aug 2016

Methodist Homes

Methodist Homes went through a consultation alongside their 2016 pay review. The recognition agreement with Methodist Homes only covers pay consultations. It was difficult working with management over this issue, and the outcome of the consultation about changes to terms and conditions was not a collective agreement with UNISON, but implemented by MHA in April/May 2016. Legal advice was sought for members. Workplace visits and activity happened to support this consultation. This involved a wider coordination of support for members in other Regions.

2 large care homes in the East Midlands were closed with short notice, so we rapidly supported those members in finding new employment locally.

27 members recruited Sept 2015 – August 2016.

Framework

A learning event was arranged in May 2016 and reps and members were recruited. There are reps in Framework but no agreed Facility time. This is something that is now being pursued. Mentoring has taken place with existing and new reps. UNISON are sponsoring an Award Event in December. .

2 new reps

15 members recruited Sept 2015 – August 2016

NCHA

NCHA was one of the first employers in the target group. The FFAO attended training events to help recruit. There has been monthly workplace visits to raise the profile over the year.

41 members recruited Sept 2015 – Aug 2016

Enable Care & Support

Support for local reps on the employers restructure dominated the year. This was followed up with workplace visits, consultation events with members.

Agreement was reached with employer to attend training events for care and support staff to access members.

13 members recruited Sept 2015 – Aug 2016

Action for Children

Workplace visits took place around the time of the Industrial Action ballot and a contact was found in Northampton. Most of the staff were TUPE's from the County council, and there were issues around commissioning and budget cuts

3 members recruited Sept 2015 – Aug 2016

Thera

This is an employer where we historically have a troubled relationship. There is a longstanding steward for the Derbyshire members. A new steward was recruited in Nottinghamshire area. Notts members meet on a regular basis and this was supported by the FFAO.

13 new members recruited Sept 2015 – Aug 2016

Supporting Active Members in the following employers:

- Affinity Trust
- Eden Futures
- Linkage Community Trust
- NCVS
- Nottingham Women's Centre
- Race Equality Council
- RNIB
- Voluntary Action Leicester

Community Conference

East Midlands region sent a delegation of 12 members in 2016. There was a regional delegates meeting held on Friday evening.

Learning Event

Held on 10 September –designed for members in Community Sector across the Region. Organised at a weekend. Job Skills and Autism Awareness workshops held.

Greater London

The Committee held three meetings throughout 2016; it is currently working with the region's Regional Committee to hold a joint seminar -The Future of Social Housing in London - in early-spring 2017. This event will largely focus on the significant threats to the community sector posed by the Housing and Planning Act. Housing associations form a substantial part of the region's community and voluntary sector membership. In addition to providing social housing, they are main contributors to supported living, community rejuvenation, and numerous, varied outreach programs.

2016 has seen an unprecedented number of mergers of local housing associations. London & Quadrant has merged with East Thames (a third planned partner - Hyde Housing - decided to withdraw); Amicus Horizon is merging with Viridian Housing and, Circle Anglia has merged with Affinity Sutton to form Clarion Housing Group. In addition, Family Mosaic has recently announced that it will be merging with one of London's oldest charitable housing trusts, Peabody Housing Association.

Both regionally and nationally, UNISON has the largest trade union membership within the sector, but these mergers will present a number of significant challenges. Attempts at efficiency savings within the larger organisations are almost inevitable; the new organisations will have a wider geographical spread thus making sustainable organising and recruitment more difficult; and the steady drying-up of government development grants and the 1% annual rent cut are all major concerns. Moreover, some employers are using the merger process as an opportunity to derecognise UNISON, a reality that has led to a particularly protracted dispute within Clarion Housing Group.

It is not all gloom. Despite the difficulties listed above, genuine organising opportunities within the sector remain plentiful. Achieving the London Living Wage amongst most sector employers has been made slightly easier by the 2015 election of a Labour Mayor. The requirement for employers to pay an apprenticeship levy from April 2017 brings UNISON's learning agenda firmly back into the sector. Apprenticeship schemes for support workers, housing officers, maintenance staff and surveyors are all obvious growth areas. And there will certainly be a requirement for increased numbers of front-line staff in the new, larger housing associations, some of whom will be amongst the biggest sector groups in Europe.

In Barnardo's, negotiations have started on the 2017/18 Cost of Living pay award. The branch has submitted a reasonable claim for a consolidated 3% increase in pay. The branch's own survey of members has found that 66% feel undervalued, 50% have found that their work demands are having a detrimental effect on their personal life, and 60% feel a lot worse off than they were 12 months ago. We expect Barnardo's management to take note of these alarming figures and make an early, sound pay award.

The Barnardo's branch has also been focusing on the challenges of a national geographical spread for the branch organization, and exploring the most effective, efficient ways of organising and recruitment of both members and activists. In partnership with the region, the branch organised a successful Activist Conference in October aimed at recruitment and development of new stewards. Topics like branch organisation, recruitment and representation of members were covered through a series of workshops and information sessions. The event was well attended and the feedback overwhelmingly positive. In a bid to improve communication with members and non-members, the branch has commissioned a new website which is now up and running at – www.unisonbarnardos.org.uk

The Community and Voluntary Organisations branch spent the year on implementing the branch development plan with the aim of tackling the challenge of a workforce divided

between a large number of small employers. This challenge lies primarily in a heavy demand for servicing members and lack of facility time for stewards' training. The branch has taken an organising approach and introduced in-house training in the form of monthly Steward Network meetings, which has resulted in increased numbers of active stewards and recognition agreements with various employers. This will be explored and developed further in 2017.

North West

The Regional Service Group has struggled to meet its objectives due to it not being at full capacity. This year a very low number of Branches and no Self Organised Groups nominated representatives to the Committee. Attendance at Committee meetings is low. However, we have succeeded in electing a Chair and consequently are now able to make interventions at Regional Council, Regional Committee and Regional Organising Committee, in addition to a number of other forums. We are currently experimenting with modern technology and examining the various options available to conduct 'virtual' meetings which, hopefully, will remove some of the barriers to participation for our members who are spread across a wide geographical area.

Along with several other regions, we were unable to fill our seats on the Service Group Executive 2016-18 in the initial round of elections. However, following the By-election we successfully filled the North West General seat.

Following a re-organisation of staff in the region, we have welcomed a new Head of Community, with whom we anticipate a fruitful relationship.

Devolution in the North West still remains an important and ever-changing phenomenon and the implications for Community members (as with everyone else) are still uncertain. We have welcomed the establishment of a VCSE Sector Reference Group in Greater Manchester which seeks to promote the role and involvement of the sector in the Devolution process and we have been able to feed in our views on a number of issues. We are actively promoting involvement in Labour Link structures and community-based campaigns (such as Citizens UK) to our membership in order to ensure that issues of concern to Community members are kept on the agenda in this process.

The results of the EU Referendum and the ensuing Brexit debate raised many questions for Community members who are EU nationals. So we were encouraged by the introduction of the Workers' Rights (Maintenance of EU Standards Bill) into Parliament in September 2016 and the launch of UNISON's EU Members Network which we actively promoted to our members.

During the year members were also consulted on disputes in Action for Children, Dimensions and Mencap which are covered elsewhere in the Annual Report.

Work on recruiting, organising and developing our Housing Association membership has not been as productive as we would like and we intend to renew our focus on this area of work during the forthcoming year.

Recruitment continues to grow steadily, with one quarter of 2016 seeing a spike in new members which more than doubled our quarterly average. Ensuring that we work alongside branches to identify organic leaders and to facilitate their development remains a key priority.

We are encouraged that a growing number of branches are recognising the significance of the increase in Community membership and the need to be proactive in the organisation, support and development of our members. Despite this, some members are reporting anecdotally that they feel there are barriers to participation in the work of their branches for a range of reasons. This may be reflected in the fact that so few branches nominated to the Regional Service Group and some more detailed work needs to be undertaken in this area.

However, the effective use of Area and Local Organisers and the strategic deployment of Regional Fighting Fund Organisers has seen some significant gains in a range of areas and some excellent examples of good practice have come to our attention, along with some stark examples of the exploitation of workers in our sector.

One crucial initiative for us is the North West Social Care Campaign “Care Workers for Change” running across the Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region Devolution areas which we are actively supporting. This wide-ranging strategic campaign, in conjunction with external partners, ultimately seeks to develop a long-term strategy for the sector to tackle under-funding, business profiteering, poor commissioning practices and an improvement in the working conditions and dignity of those employed to deliver a crucial public service. It will gain momentum in the lead up to the Local and Mayoral Elections in May 2017 and will run for two years in total.

The resulting potential growth in membership and union recognition by employers will raise a range of issues relating to the placement of members and strategy for sustainable organising, on which we will be working closely with the North West Region.

We have publicised Community Conference widely throughout the region so are hoping that our efforts have paid off and yields an increased regional delegation this year!

Northern

A new Community Organising project started this year in the Northern region with a full time GFF local organiser. The aim of the project is to clearly build our membership in Community across the region whilst building self-sustaining structures for the future. The project is taking more of an engagement approach than previous projects by communicating with our existing membership about what they would like to see from UNISON in terms of training, campaigning, etc. It is also identifying particular sector groups where members have common workplace issues in order to bring people together to events which will engage people in further UNISON activism. This approach is receiving positive feedback from our current membership and we are starting to see the return in recruitment figures in the sector.

The region is also drafting a Community Ethical Charter which we are hoping to launch at an event in early 2017 which we will be asking local employers to sign up to, we will also be asking Local Authorities and NHS Trusts to sign up making sure that where services go into the Community Sector they are ensuring that the organisations who bid for contracts have signed up to the charter.

This year one of the region’s branches was successful in gaining funding nationally to run a Learning Project targeting the Community Sector. Numerous courses were held over the last 12 months resulting in increased numbers from this sector attending learning courses and we have been successful in increasing the numbers of ULRs in the sector. The Branch membership in the sector also saw a rise of over 10% during the life of project.

National Minimum wage claims in relation to sleep-in payments continued to be a significant organising opportunity throughout the sector with numerous claims being lodged with various employers and lots of recruitment been seen on the back of the some of our successes and continued presence in workplaces.

This year has also seen the setting up of the Northern Regional Community Service Group, although attendees are still fairly low in number this something we are building on and the group is sending delegates to Regional Council and Committee ensuring fuller participation of our Community members in the wider regional structures.

Scotland

This has been another extremely challenging year for our UNISON members in the Community Sector across Scotland. Austerity is taking hold with the closure of vital services, redundancies and cuts to terms and conditions in the continuing race to the bottom!

We are happy to report that membership in the sector continues to grow steadily. Additionally an increase in new stewards is welcome news and we hope this trend continues over the coming year.

Many of you will have been following the Scottish Campaign for all Care Workers in Scotland to be paid the Scottish Living Wage of £8.25 per hour from the 1st October 2016. This was successful and we are now in the process of moving to implementation which is proving more difficult than anticipated as councils are not releasing the additional funds provided by Scottish Government.

Holiday Pay, Travel Time and the non-payment of the National Minimum Wage have been headline news and a key organising issue for the sector.

The overall picture continues to be that local authorities are seeking to get more from community and voluntary organisations for less money with the inevitable downward pressure on staffing costs being the result.

Facility time continues to be an issue across the sector with many stewards giving up their own time to attend meetings and training. Limited time is given to attend disciplinary hearings with often little or no time to prepare.

Personalisation continues at a pace with the inevitable cuts that we predicated materialising. Wide media coverage continues to raise awareness of the inappropriate use of zero hour contracts. We are always looking for members who are prepared to tell their story? 2017 will be a testing year for the Scottish Community Sector and we look forward to working closely with UNISON as a whole in facing the challenges ahead – Stronger together in UNISON.

South East

A number of meetings of the South East Regional Forum took place during 2016 attracting representatives from a variety of employers. A record number of regional delegates attended the Community Conference earlier in the year. In 2017 the Forum meetings will be

held in different locations to make it easier for activists across the region to attend at least one meeting. The venues are Brighton, Guildford and London.

The effect of government cuts continues to be felt in the community sector, with some organisations attempting to cut terms and conditions, downgrade staff or replace them with volunteers. In the region the impact of 15 minute visits by home carers is an issue both for the carers and their clients. Direct payments mean that some clients do not ask for help when they need it as they fear losing hours of support that they need for another purpose.

The voluntary sector is under threat, with some employers saying the care system is on the verge of collapse. Local authority commissioners affected by budget cuts have shifted the balance when assessing bids increasingly towards cost rather than quality. Client needs are assessed to either cut their support or move them to a different setting to move the bill.

A big concern is funding the increases due under the minimum wage legislation as there is no clarity on where the money will come from. Owing to the low rates paid by commissioners, some of which are insufficient to cover basic current staffing costs, any extra sums will cause a problem for organisations already struggling. While there is always a bidder for services at whatever price, the serious pressure on costs could mean that reputable organisations will be driven out of the market to be replaced by those for whom short term profit is key.

The sector continues to be at the sharp end of government cuts, with members reporting employers cutting services to the minimum and not replacing staff. This can place members at risk, where some organisations expect staff to conduct risk assessments on unknown clients on their own. The generally poor terms and conditions in the sector has also resulted in some staff not being given full information in order not to deter them from working with particular clients, thus potentially putting both them and vulnerable people at risk.

The forum has now agreed a budget for 2017, to include provision for dedicated newsletters to members in target employers. The aim is to improve organisation by increasing the number of members and stewards, with the aim of increasing influence within the employers. The target employers are Clarion Group (Affinity Sutton/Circle), Dimensions and Welmede/Avenues Trust. The latter two organisations are planning to merge and confirmation is expected very soon. Both will retain their own identity within a group structure. While Welmede is Surrey based Avenues Trust operates in parts of the South East as well as in London, parts of West Midlands and Eastern Region. We have a good relationship with all three employers.

Action on motions from Community Conference 2016

Item	Decision	Action
M 1	Violence at Work	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> campaign for zero tolerance and expose the failure of employers to meet their obligation to record workplace assaults use available data to expose the frequency and severity of assaults, year-on-year, and campaign for effective regulation to compel community sector employers to record and report workplace assaults and adopt policies and procedures to make the community sector safe 	<p>Actions taken;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> raised this issue with the Shadow Minister, making use of the robust statistics from the previous UNISON Community survey. Highlighted existing UNISON health and safety guidance on violence at work with reps, and shared this on social media. This advice has included promoting the importance of health and safety reps for Community members Worked with the UNISON press office to raise this issue up the media agenda, which has included a report on violence in housing associations on BBC Radio 4. We have collected a number of compelling case studies of bad practice and good practice which we will use in ongoing campaigning work. This was done via a dedicated online violence at work survey.
M 2	Violence at work	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign to raise awareness of this problem and seek case studies from Community activists Ask regions and branches with Community members for examples of good policies and then share best practice Work with UNISON's Health and Safety Committee to produce and distribute guidance on tackling violence at work for branches and activists Approach Community employers' organisations to undertake joint work on this issue Encourage Community members to become active as health and safety reps to help tackle this problem 	<p>In addition to actions above on M 1:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> We have begun developing a "UNISON Safety at Work Charter". This will outline a series of minimum standards which we would expect employers in the sector to sign up to, including recording incidents of violence at work, the provision of training for staff and clearly understood procedures for reporting incidents. The charter will be developed in co-operation with regions, branches and activists, particularly health and safety reps. This will be piloted first in the housing associations sector and then rolled out to the rest of Community
M 3	Funding of Social Care in Community	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to campaign to protect terms and conditions of Community members 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> This issue has been raised in meetings with two different shadow ministers

	<p>2. Work with regions, branches with Community members, other service groups and external organisations to influence commissioners to properly fund contracts.</p> <p>3. Promote the “Declaration of Interdependence” between the TUC and Children England which sets out quality commissioning practices for not-for-profit childrens’ services, and seek to extend this to other sectors.</p> <p>4. Work with the NEC to campaign for adequate funding for social care services.</p>	<p>2. Re-publicised the ‘Declaration of Interdependence’ (developed with the TUC and Children England which sets out minimum standards for commissioning and the workforce) with UNISON members.</p> <p>3. We have worked co-operatively with colleagues in Local Government on the “Care in Crisis” Report which has highlighted the urgent need for adequate funding.</p> <p>See also M4</p>
M 4	Good Care Costs	
	<p>Work with Labour Link, NDMC, Health & LG SGs to</p> <p>Work with labour MP’s to raise the response to increasing pay from employers and ensure there is ring fenced funding at local level</p> <p>Ensure that the rise in the minimum wage to the National Living Wage is adequately funded by Government</p> <p>Raise the profile of the Save Care Now campaign amongst Community Service Group and Disabled members</p> <p>Campaign to raise awareness that members are paying for their own rise in the minimum wage through attacks on their terms and conditions</p>	<p>See also M3</p> <p>1. We have publicised the ‘Save care now’ campaign among activists.</p> <p>2. The UNISON Living Wage guidance has been shared with activists.</p> <p>3. Issues regarding funding were included in the UNISON submission to the low pay commission.</p> <p>4. UNISON negotiators at national, regional and local level have consistently argued that increases in pay should not be at the detriment of other terms and conditions.</p>
M 5	Ethical Procurement Policy in Housing associations and Charities	
	<p>- Continue to promote campaigning for a living wage to all Community members</p> <p>- Produce sector-specific guidance for activists in community on approaching employers about ethical procurement and ensuring UNISON has input into any relevant procurement processes</p>	<p>See also M4</p> <p>1. Living Wage article included in Community newsletter</p> <p>2. Sector specific guidance on ethical procurement produced and distributed.</p>
M 6	Low pay in the community sector	
	Continue to campaign and lobby for adequate funding, to ensure that care services are commissioned fairly and efficiently, and that employers are able to pay the living wage to their staff	See M4, M5 M7 and M8.
M 7	Low Pay	
	1. Work with the NEC to campaign to establish the Living Wage as the National Minimum Wage	1. Establishing Living Wage as national minimum wage was contained in the UNISON submission to the low pay

	<p>2. Work with the Young Members Forum to campaign for pay equality for young members</p> <p>3. Promote UNISON's campaigning and bargaining guide to the living wage</p> <p>4. Work with other service groups, branches, regions and external bodies to get commissioners to include the living wage as a contractual requirement</p> <p>5. Work with regions and branches with Community members to map employers which pay the living wage</p> <p>6. Seek to include the Living Wage in pay claims in Community employers which do not pay it and resist the reducing of other terms and conditions to pay for it</p> <p>7. Work with sector bodies to highlight living wage employers for living wage week 2016</p> <p>8. Promote UNISON's ethical care charter as an exemplar for staff and service users with commissioners and employers</p>	<p>commission.</p> <p>2. The National Young Members Forum has worked to promote an understanding of the difference between the Government's 'National Living Wage' and the independently-calculated Living Wage. This has been explained through briefing notes used in street campaigning and promotion of information through social media and other UNISON communication platforms.</p> <p>3. The NYMF has also been consulted and is supporting a proposal for a key piece of research being commissioned by the union's Bargaining Unit to make the case for no age distinctions between the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the new "National Living Wage".</p> <p>3. Community provided various examples of our successes for UNISON media work during Living Wage week.</p> <p>4. The ethical care charter has been highlighted in briefings to community activists.</p> <p>Also see M4</p>
M 8	Living Wage	
	<p>1. Highlight the impact of tax and welfare changes on community sector workers</p> <p>2. Oppose the new age requirements for the National Living Wage</p> <p>3. Ensure that sleepover, travel time, accommodation, uniform, training and other protections are not diminished in the move from the minimum wage to the Tory "living wage"; and,</p> <p>4. Monitor and publicise the work of HMRC inspectors enforcing pay protection in the Community Sector to ensure that Community Sector rights are respected, underpayments are recovered and illegal employers are prosecuted and publicly exposed.</p>	<p>1. UNISON has progressed a significant collective grievance in one major Community Sector employer over the issue of underpayment of the minimum wage relating to sleep ins. This is ongoing.</p> <p>2. Several other major employers have now accepted UNISON's long-term argument on sleep ins and the minimum wage. We are engaged in negotiations over settlements, including back pay.</p> <p>3. The issue of HMRC inspections has been monitored via conversations with employers who have been subject to inspections.</p>
M 9	Living Wage	
	<p>Continue to look at ways of mapping the sector and gathering data on the Living Wage with a view to stepping up campaigning, organising and recruitment around the issue. Conference also calls on</p>	<p>We have used the Community members survey results from 2016 to highlight the issue of members paid below the Living Wage.</p>

	the SGE to make representations to ensure that the union's general campaigning around the Living Wage gives due prominence to its significance in the community and voluntary sector	Working with bargaining support and other UNISON service groups we have ensured a Community angle has been included in UNISON-wide campaign on Living Wage.
M 10	Fair treatment for workers in the community and voluntary sector	
	Gather information on unfair and punitive working practices; Use the information gathered to provide further guidance to branches on reasonable working practices; Supplement the guidance with an awareness campaign for members and potential new members working in the sector on the support that is available through UNISON.	We have examined working practices reported in members' survey, and highlighted trends for use in branch guidance. We have circulated existing guidance where relevant, and explored any issues where guidance is not available. We are developing a leaflet highlighting support UNISON gives to members in the Community and Voluntary sector.
M 11	Preserve our terms and conditions	
	Work with Labour Link and NDMC to: 1. Campaign for fairer funding for housing associations 2. Campaign for the protection and improvement of rights for disabled workers in housing associations 3. Ensure that branches are issued guidance on how to handle reorganisations. Including best practice on how to avoid redundancies with specific guidance non discriminatory criteria/processes for reorganisations and monitoring of the process and the end results	The issue of poor funding of Housing Associations has been raised, in writing, with the relevant Shadow Minister. Advice from NDMC on the key issues for disabled workers in housing associations has been requested and we will incorporate advice in relevant guidance. Guidance on re-organisations has been reviewed and re-issued to Community Reps. This also covers tackling discrimination.
M 12	Attacks on Third Sector Terms and Conditions	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bargaining and negotiating advice to branches to enable them to protect members' terms and conditions. • Work with UNISON Labour Link Committee to lobby government to ensure that Third Sector organisations are given more funding so that members' terms and conditions are not decimated. • Campaign for equal pay for all, under and over 25 years of age. 	The relevant guidance from bargaining support has been circulated to community branches and activists. We have funding issues with politicians and media at appropriate times, including via Labour Link. Work with Policy and MPU on cross-union campaigns for equal pay for all.
M 13	Sick Pay	
	Research good and innovative practice in reducing sickness absence using positive and supportive methods Circulate negotiating guidance to regions	We have circulated health and safety guidance on sick pay and highlighted the organising potential of this issue.

	and branches with Community members Encourage negotiators to submit claims to Community employers to improve their sick pay schemes. Encourage Community activists to use this as an organising issue	Best practice examples will be collected in the forthcoming Community members survey.
M 14	Facility time in the community sector	
	Circulate updated guidance on negotiating facility time Include clear advice on equalities duties and activities Keep branches up to date with developments in this area.	We have re-circulated the guidance on facility time to activists, branches and regions and lead negotiators at recognised employers. This includes guidance on equality duties in the outsourced sector.
M 15	Death of the Racial Equality Movement	
	Engage with the NBMC to highlight this issue and develop briefings and campaign resources for branches and regional Black members committees to support race equality legislation and the racial equality movement. Encourage Black members' attendance and higher visibility at the National Community Seminar and Conference encourage Black Members to self organise a Black Caucus for Black Community Sector workers to discuss their issues Liaise with the UNISON Labour Link executive to highlight these issues with UNISON Labour Link MP's.	NBMC have provided materials available on this issue, and circulate them to branches, regions, and on social media. Branches have been reminded to highlight community conference to black members. We have reminded NBMC of opportunity for a caucus at community conference 2017.
M 16	Black Community Sector and Commissioning	
	Work with the relevant sections of UNISON to encourage Branches to request employers conduct full race equality monitoring of their commissioning processes; Request any resulting ethnic monitoring data from Branches; Share any resulting ethnic monitoring data with UNISON National Black Member's Committee (NBMC) Consult the NBMC on which Black community sector and equality organisations this information should be shared with for any future work, e.g. BTEG (Black Training and Enterprise Group), Runnymede Trust and Equanomics UK.	We have raised this issue with Local Government, Health, and Police and Justice service groups, and asked them for the results of any monitoring. We have asked Community branches for any monitoring information they hold. We have also asked NBMC which organisations they are working with on this. This work is ongoing.
M 17	Count us in	
	circulate the bargaining factsheet 'Workforce monitoring for sexual orientation	We have sent the factsheet to Community branches and encouraged community

	<p>and gender identity' to branches within community; advertise and promote engagement with My.Unison to branches within our service group, encouraging members to update their personal information, including completing the new sexual orientation and gender history fields; revisit previous conference decisions of our service group on building and strengthening self-organisation and produce an updated action plan to be circulated branches within community</p>	<p>branches to get members to update all their personal information, including the new fields.</p> <p>Work will continue in 2017 on highlighting these issues.</p>
EM 1	Financial Negligence of Charities' Trustees	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Campaign to ensure Charities are transparent about their finances and take management of financial risk seriously in order to safeguard jobs and the important work that they do. 2. Produce guidance for Community Sector UNISON representatives who fear their charity might be having significant financial problems. 3. Approach the Charity Commission and Community Sector employers' organisations to promote early consultation with staff and trade unions beyond the legal minimum timescales. 	<p>We have written to the Charities Commission to encourage early consultation with staff and trade unions beyond the legal minimum timescales.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to produce and circulate guidance on this, using expertise of members in the sector. This will be informed by relevant recent examples.</p>