

RETIRED MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORT

The National Retired Members' Committee Annual Report has now been published. Questions on the Annual Report must be submitted using the Online Conference System (OCS) by Wednesday 12 September 2018.

The report is a summary of the work of the National Retired Members' Committee since last year's Conference.

The Retired Members' Standing Orders Committee agreed to adopt the procedures agreed for National Delegate Conference with regard to the submission of questions on the Annual Report. The Standing Orders Committee believes that this process enables Conference to deal with the Annual Report effectively and efficiently and leave more time for motions to be discussed.

Under this procedure questions on the Annual Report are now invited and will be responded to in advance of Conference. The only questions that may be put orally to the National Retired Members' Committee at Conference will be supplementary to the questions submitted under this process. It would be preferred if any supplementary questions could be submitted by Wednesday 3 October so that any additional information requested can be sought prior to the start of Conference.

The timetable for submission of questions on the Annual Report is as follows:

Wednesday 12 September 2018 Deadline for questions to be submitted through the Online Conference System (OCS).

Wednesday 19 September 2018 Deadline for responses to be submitted onto the Online Conference System (OCS).

Wednesday 3 October 2018 Preferred date for supplementary questions to be submitted through the Online Conference System (OCS).

Wednesday 10 October 2018 Platform response to supplementary questions.

General information on accessing the Online Conference System (OCS) was distributed in the Retired Members' Conference Bulletin, which is available on the UNISON website.

To submit a question on the annual report through the OCS, follow the instructions below

- Sign onto Online Conference System (OCS)
- Select National Retired Members' Conference
- Select 'Agenda'
- Select 'Annual Report Questions'
- Select question type from drop down box
- Select 'create a new question'
- Follow instructions which will give you a form to complete

- Complete form – remembering to fill in all mandatory fields
- You can copy and paste your question into the text box or type the text in
- If you want to do this in stages you can select the save choice and come back into OCS later to finish
- When you are happy with your question, select 'Submit'

If you encounter any problems, please seek assistance from your regional OCS contact (details in the Conference Bulletin) or Colin Derrig on c.derrig@unison.co.uk

REPORT OF NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' COMMITTEE INCLUDING ACTION ARISING FROM 2017 RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

MESSAGE FROM ROSIE MACGREGOR - CHAIRPERSON, UNISON NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' COMMITTEE

Introduction

I was elected for a third term as Chair of UNISON's National Retired Members' Committee in January. I feel at last that I am now settling into a role which can be quite daunting at times. I am immensely proud to be representing nearly 165,000 retired members of UNISON, more retired members than the total membership of many smaller unions. I am equally proud of the strong traditions of democracy and debate within our union which promote equality and freedom of speech. We may not always agree but we can respect each other's opinions.

I've enjoyed attending a number of conferences during the year including our National Women's Conference, National Delegate Conference, NPC Pensioners' Parliament and TUC Pensions Conference as well as visiting several branches and talking to retired members. We share many of the same problems including worries about the future, poor pensions, the crisis in adult social care, an underfunded NHS, closure of libraries and other community services, lack of accessible transport and insufficient specialist housing.

We are now once again officially the largest trades union in the UK as we celebrate 25 years in UNISON and are in a stronger position than ever to make our voice heard.

The death of our former General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe at the age of only 72 just before our Retired Members' Conference last year was a huge shock to us all. The celebration in memory of Bick held at Central Hall, Westminster in April attended by many senior politicians, family, staff and of course our members was a tremendous tribute to a great leader, orator and a champion of so many different causes including the National Pensioners' Convention. It was with great fondness that each of the speakers, which included son Philip Bickerstaffe, Jeremy Corbyn, John Prescott, Maxine Peake and Dave Prentis, told of his humour, friendship and achievements and reminded us that his greatest triumphs among so many were the formation of UNISON and the successful campaign for a National Minimum Wage.

Policies and relevant issues

Brexit

The country continues to be in turmoil over the decision to leave the European Union and I fear that neither the supporters of 'Brexit' or the so called 'Remainers' will be entirely satisfied by the outcome. I had little confidence that the government would steer us through Brexit without serious difficulties and this seems to be the case. We do not know how our economy will be affected and this will have implications, for better or worse, not just for prices of essential items but for services and investments in pension funds. Any international trade agreements under the current government with the likes of the USA may bring further privatisation.

Another drawback associated, in part with Brexit due to the implications of limiting immigration, and something on which we rely as pensioners, is the impact on staffing levels within the NHS and social care. Recruitment from overseas continuing to fall due to the uncertainty of what the future might hold for new staff moving to the UK. This is made worse by student applications to universities for nursing courses continuing to fall due to the introduction of student loans instead of bursaries and existing NHS workers leaving due to stress and low morale. We must also oppose the hostile environment for migrant workers and support their rights as well as those of refugees seeking asylum.

Following National Delegate Conference it is UNISON policy to campaign to keep public services outside the scope of new trade agreements and oppose legislation to liberalise, deregulate or downgrade existing standards. There are 75,000 EU citizens working in health and social care whose contribution, particularly to us as retired members, is greatly valued.

Pensions

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) poverty levels at the end of 2017 for those aged 75 and over were 18.5%, compared to 11% among the whole population and just over 10% for the age group 66-75 and it found that women are most affected by old-age poverty. It also found that obesity, one of the main risk factors causing health problems, is very common among older people in the United Kingdom. Perhaps due to the poor quality of affordable food and lack of exercise. Whilst many of us can rely on our public sector occupational pensions this is not the case for all our retired members. Many poorer pensioners, often women and those who were low paid, rely on the state pension for most or all their needs. The OECD has also produced a report to show how the UK pensions in 2018 compare with other countries and rated the UK as having the least generous pensions.

The challenges facing pensions are the impact of stock market volatility, a move to ethical investments, the need to retain existing pension schemes, defined benefits and auto-enrolment, retention of the Triple Lock and the safety net of a decent state pension. It is essential that we have trade union representatives on pension boards.

Pensions Policy Institute research indicates that if the Triple Lock from the State Pension was removed 700,000 more pensioners would be in poverty and that women would be disproportionately affected.

Pension savings continue to be undermined by greater freedom to spend pension pots and people's failure to make rational decisions about their future needs.

The cold weather and heavy snow falls at the beginning of March resulted in some of our members coping as best they could without heating, electricity and transport whilst others worried about the increased cost of keeping warm. It brought together neighbours for some but increased loneliness for others. Loneliness is often named as one of the major concerns of pensioners leading to social isolation and the impact of this both on physical and mental ill health. It is for this reason that we have selected Loneliness as the subject for our Panel Debate at National Retired Members Conference.

The Crisis in Health and Social Care

The NHS celebrated its 70th birthday on 5 July this year yet current government policies have resulted in massive underfunding, false promises and continued privatisation.

Staff are being driven away from the NHS due to excessive workloads resulting from staff shortages and poor pay. Social care is equally poorly funded and staff are exploited as are those in their care. This also contributes to bed blocking in the NHS when care home and home care services are inadequate.

We've known for a long time that the care of older people in the UK is simply not good enough and successive governments have also failed to meet the challenge of an ageing population. So it should be no surprise that residential care is now at a crisis point fueled by local authority cuts, poor leadership and staff shortages as well as the dogma of privatisation that puts profit before people.

UNISON is responding to the crisis by fighting further privatisation, campaigning for improved funding, better quality social services and a system that treats both care workers and users with dignity. UNISON is encouraging employers to sign up to our Ethical Care Charter. Those who have already signed are Labour councils but Cornwall County, a Liberal and Independent coalition and York, a Conservative ruled council have recently signed up to it.

We have highlighted the reliance placed by many pensioners on public service workers, mostly those working in the NHS and Adult Social Care, most of whom work long hours for low pay. Our heartfelt thanks go to them for the work they do and their commitment. They care about us and we care about them too!

Our thanks must also go to many of our retired members who have supported campaigns by striking NHS staff, Care Home and Home Care Workers and by attending branch, regional and national rallies and demonstrations. These included Birmingham home care workers who had been pushed to breaking point by massive cuts; Wigan NHS workers who took successful strike action against the transfer of their service to a subsidiary company that would open the door to potential privatisation; and staff working in care homes and home care across Bath and North East Somerset where these already low-paid workers were facing a £1,200 pay cut as a result of shift changes. These staff are employed by Sirona Care and Health though the blame must go in part to the council's failure to properly fund the service as a result of massive government underfunding of local government. I joined a sizeable rally attended by Assistant General Secretary Roger McKenzie at Bath Guildhall on 12 July in support of these workers. Well over 100 UNISON members walked out that day and were planning continued industrial action until plans to cut their pay were dropped. The strike has since been called off after UNISON and Sirona reached an agreement pending consideration by the Council's Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel in September.

Many of you joined the TUC march in May under the banner Step up for Public Services and the march to celebrate 70 years of the NHS in June. These are just some of the ways that we, as retired members, can support our working colleagues.

Housing

The aftermath of the devastating fire Grenfell Tower is still being felt, primarily by those who survived, some of whom are still not rehoused, but also the repercussions for occupiers of many other high rise buildings where similar cladding materials were used. There continues to be a lack of confidence in a system that fails to protect those living in tower blocks.

The elected members of Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council have been criticised not just for their poor response but also for their lack of investment in social housing, disregard for health and safety, cost cutting and privatisation. All this in one of the wealthiest local authorities in the country with £270million in its reserves at the time of the Grenfell fire but where the differential between its wealthiest residents and those living in poverty is massive.

Our working members there have been unfairly criticised because they either worked for Kensington and Chelsea or for the Kensington Tenant Management Organisation and have faced disgusting abuse from the public. UNISON supports these members who worked unflinchingly and in extreme circumstances to help those who have suffered as a result of the fire and is calling for Justice for Grenfell.

Even as we await the outcome of the Public Inquiry into Grenfell Tower we learn that Kensington and Chelsea allegedly sold off its only remaining care home, Thamesbrook, for a staggering £70 million with hollow promises of building 150 new homes for older residents that have not as yet materialised. The site of Thamesbrook has been developed into a luxury complex of flats for older people with prices starting at an eye-watering £3million for a one bed flat and an annual service charge of nearly £17,000. I suspect this is way beyond the means of any of our members!!

The staggering inequality and unfairness of this leaves me almost speechless at a time when urgent action is needed to end the housing crisis.

I was pleased to be nominated and elected to sit on the National Pensioners' Convention Housing Policy working group. I am also pleased to advise that the detailed information received from UNISON staff in response to the initial consultation paper has been well received and very helpful.

We are currently facing the worst housing crisis since the Second World War with insufficient affordable homes and smaller homes to enable pensioners to downscale. This leaves many facing insecurity and uncertain futures. Those needing care are faced with inadequate provision and loss of dignity and those who can afford to pay are often faced with massive bills as well as poor delivery.

The lack of affordable homes also places a huge pressure on health and social care workers, especially those living in areas where housing costs are high and without sufficient affordable housing. Many are forced to move to places where they can afford a home or leave the service to find better paid jobs. This has a detrimental impact on staffing levels and service delivery. The harm is increasingly felt by those of us who have retired.

UNISON is calling for the government to take urgent action to address the housing crisis. There needs to be investment in safe affordable housing in a society that is failing the homeless and working people in general.

Public Service Workers

Our working colleagues are often unfairly criticised by the public when things go wrong and negative comments in the media are not helpful. Many of the jobs carried out by UNISON members in responding to emergencies and facing intolerable conditions such as the Grenfell disaster and clearing up after accidents go unnoticed and unrewarded, as do simple acts of kindness in caring for older people.

The extraordinary incident involving a Russian spy and his daughter in Salisbury city centre was worthy of a John le Carré plot. A situation further confused by misinformation and guess work from our own Foreign Office. We must not forget that, in addition to all the military personnel, it is our members in the NHS and emergency services, including members of my own Wiltshire branch, that have been working hard to resolve the situation on the ground and care for the people who were attacked. It can leave many of us feeling vulnerable, especially given the poisoning of a second couple in July and the subsequent death of one of them. There are plenty of theories but very few reassurances for people living in the area. Before the latest event which has left local residents even more worried, one of the retired members in my branch who lives in Salisbury said 'It makes me really nervous when

the unexpected happens so close to home’.

Communications

The National Committee has been working to improve communications with retired members but it has not been easy and is complicated by the new legislation on Data Protection and the fact that we do not have e-mail addresses for the majority of retired members. There have been some improvements as those retiring now are more likely to have access to computers and modern technology. We continue to look at ways of improving communications. We have had some small successes, but not enough, in persuading those that produce our in-house publications that they should include information about and for retired members and report our achievements.

We know we still have much to offer our union by assisting in branch campaigns and we must be given a voice.

TUC Pensioners Committee

This Committee only meets twice a year at Congress House but provides a useful dialogue and is an opportunity to discuss the campaigns of other unions and share information. We receive regular Economic Updates as well as publications such as the TUC booklet on Fixing the Retirement Lottery which can be downloaded from the TUC website. The most recent economic update suggests that GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth has been gradually weakening to a five year low. Globally the UK is at the bottom of the G7 economies and International Monetary Fund forecasts are not encouraging. Wages are stagnating and both wages and pensions are being outstripped by inflation.

It is important that we continue to make sure our voice is heard on the TUC Pensioners Committee and raise the issues that matter. Our young members are the future of the union but the rights of our retired members are just as important. We have the skills and experience that can be used to help support those in the *workplace*.

Pensioners’ Organisations

The National Committee continues to work with the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), Scottish Pensioners Forum and Age UK in campaigning on behalf of older people. I continue to represent UNISON on a number of NPC committees including its Executive Council, the Executive Committee and I Chair its Women’s Working

Party. Richard Mann from Greater London Region represents us on its Trade Union Working Party.

Three members of the National Retired Members, myself, Sheila Crosby and Val Graham together with our National Officer attended the Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool in June on behalf of UNISON.

Val Graham and I also represented the National Retired Members organisation together with one representative from each of the regions at our National Delegate Conference in Brighton the following week.

Priorities

Our priorities as ever are to campaign for the things that are vital to us as pensioners, not just for ourselves but for future pensioners.

This is why it is so important during our annual Retired Members Conference that we reconsider our policy priorities for next year. Furthermore, we have the opportunity as our conference ends to take forward two motions to National Delegate Conference that we consider most important to us as retired members. Last year we selected "Dignity in Social Care, People Before Profit, Building for the Future" and "Triple -Lock on State Pensions". Regrettably neither of these was heard at National Delegate Conference I don't want to influence delegates but would ask that consideration is given to the Motions that contain issues likely to be prioritised as important to both working and retired members as these will be more likely to be heard at next year's national delegate conference.

Thanks

I would like to record my thanks to members of the National Committee for their support and their contributions during the last year

The National Committee would like to thank the retired member activists in branches and regions for their hard work and contributions during the year in pursuit of the interests of our retired membership.

Finally, a very special thanks to all the UNISON staff for their support to retired members over the last year.

REPORT OF NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' COMMITTEE

During the last year representation on the National Retired Members' Committee (NRMCM) has been as follows: Rosie Macgregor (South Western, Chairperson), Ettie Amos (Northern), Steve Beardsmore (West Midlands), Angela Boorman (Northern Ireland), Shelia Crosby (Yorkshire & Humberside), Bob Dutton (Cymru/Wales), Valarie Graham (East Midlands), Rosemary Jackson (Scotland), Jo Mclean (Scotland), Richard Mann (Greater London), Linda Richards (South Eastern), Maureen Vass (North West), and John Walker (Eastern). The NEC were represented by Edwin Jeffries (Deputy Chairperson), Jenny Forbes-Reid and Polly Smith.

In addition to the two NRMCM delegates (Rosie MacGregor and Valarie Graham), all 12 regions were represented at National Delegate Conference held this year in Brighton as follows: Suze Oldfield (Eastern), Fran Street (East Midlands), Alen Hawley (Greater London), Eileen Thompson (Northern), Mary Ferris (Northern Ireland), Paul Wiggins (North West), Marie Macrae (Scotland), Terence Martin (South Eastern), Elizabeth Payne-Ahmadi (South West), Thomas Beedle (Wales), Malcolm Swann (West Midlands) and Irene Wilson (Yorkshire & Humberside).

The involvement of our delegation sends a clear message to the rest of the union, that retired members are a part of UNISON. Retired members again participated in a number of debates, including speaking in support of issues of concern to their working colleagues.

During the past year the Retired Members' Organisation continued to work successfully with the NPC who have proved to be effective campaigning partners.

As in previous years, many UNISON retired members attended the NPC Pensioners' Parliament.

The report on the restructuring of unison National Retired Members' Conference which was sent to regional committees, all delegates who attended the 2016 conference and placed on the UNISON website. Members were asked to select one of the 4 options contained in paragraphs 6 to 9 of the report and reply before 22 September 2017.

At its meeting held on 11 October, the NRMCM received a report on the results of the consultation. The NRMCM were of the view that there were an insufficient number of responses, and that the responses received had been fairly evenly-split over different options. The NRMCM therefore decided it was appropriate to leave the conference format as it stood.

UNISON LGBT CONFERENCE, 17-19 OCTOBER 2017 REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES

The Retired Members' Organisation was represented by Janet Royston (South West) and Kevin Perkins (Greater London).

Janet Royston and Kevin Perkins attended the National Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender Members Conference in Brighton on 17th – 19th November last year.

Between us we spoke at least 10 times to various motions and amendments.

Conference had a total of 50 motions and 23 amendments on the agenda, yet all business was completed with twenty minutes to spare, and without anyone moving procedural votes to shorten debate and move on to next business. That is not to say that everything was nodded through. There were a series of motions on Transgender rights (to which Janet spoke eloquently) and on non-binary inclusion. The two lengthiest debates were on motion 8 – Towards a more inclusive self-organised group, which will result in a consultation taking place before 2018 conference on changing the Group's name to LGBT+, and motion 33 – Stonewall: repairing the damage, which was lost on a card vote (102 for; 132 against)

A number of motions were specific to older LGBT people: motion 34 dealt with LGBT care provision, motion 35 (to which Kevin spoke) was on surviving partners' pensions and mirrored the one which was passed at National Retired Members' Conference in October. Motion 21 – Retaining LGBT members when they retire, instructed the National LGBT committee to work with the NEC, other self-organised groups' national committees and the National Retired Members' Committee to develop a strategy to retain members when they retire.

The LGBT conference has different rules from Retired Members' when it comes to selecting motions to National Delegate Conference, in that such motions have to be separately voted on before any ballot to select the two motions to go forward. This year three motions were tabled, one of which from West Midlands was on a proposed Rule Change to Rule D.7.8 concerning representatives of the National Retired Members Organisation to self-organised group conferences. Essentially the change would mean the representatives would be "elected by and from among" relevant retired members of each self-organised group. Fortunately, (as will be seen below) West Midlands came armed with literature explaining what the Rule Change meant, and this was circulated widely amongst delegates. Kevin spoke in favour of the Rule Change, and it was passed by Conference, but unsuccessful in the ballot. However, members of the National LGBT Committee urged delegates to propose the Rule Change to their individual branches to go from their to National Delegate Conference (at the time of writing at least four branches have indicated they will do this...)

Outside of the main conference, there was a side meeting on involving retired members in LGBT self-organisation, which opened up a number of avenues to be explored and there was a commitment from the National LGBT Committee members present to take work forward on this issue. Amongst the workshops there was a very interesting one entitled Branch LGBT Officers – skills exchange, where examples of best practice, problems encountered, and solutions found were exchanged. The National Retired Members' Committee may wish to consider something similar for Retired Members Conference.

Thanks are due to Bob Deacon for staffing the Retired Members stall throughout the Conference. Head office had arranged for the Retired Members' Tablecloth to adorn the stall. We all stood and surveyed the tablecloth and were in unison in agreeing how magnificent it looked, but it lacked that little something – something to put on it.

Fortunately, Bob was able to provide retired members' literature from the West Midlands to cover the void, including the very helpful summary of the reasoning behind the call for a Rule Change discussed above.

LGBT CAUCUS, UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE 2017

13 members present from seven regions, nearly double any earlier caucus and including at least one first-time delegate. However, proportionality issue - men appeared to outnumber women 3:1.

Chair: Sue Salzedo; Reporter: Bob Deacon.

Agreed delay report to reflect outcomes of this conference and LGBT Conference.

1. 2017 Retired Members' Conference Agenda

Items of business with greatest LGBT impacts, all of which were carried, may be:

- 2.1 Advocacy for Retirement Home Residents – amendment adds equalities. This could contribute to implementation of motion 34 of LGBT conference.
- 8 Equal Rights for Cohabitees Notwithstanding equal marriage, likely to remain 'overhang' issue with disproportionate effect on same-sex couples.
- 11 Retaining Members when they Retire - motion 21 of LGBT Conference makes some of the same points.
- 13 Equal Pensions - and its amendments. Similar to motion 35 of LGBT Conference. Suggestion RM Conference select for NDC unsuccessful but moves to do so afoot in certain branches. Text of updated draft motion available on request.
- 14 Retired Members' Conference – Fair Representation – Need for thorough review of fair representation in RM organisation, not just conference. Motion next year?

2. Conference Arrangements

- Caucuses – disadvantage being last now discussion groups not pre-booked. Reference to National Retired Members' Committee: Return to rotating caucuses instead of always holding them in same order.
- Disappointment over lack of Tuesday evening social

3. Item outstanding from Previous Years

Self Organised Group Conferences – At this conference, National Retired Members' Committee will launch survey of relevant retired members about the right to submit motions and amendments to SOG conferences. Closes 5pm on 8th December. launched?

4. Other Matters

- Criticism of choice of Bournemouth for next year's conference – too hilly for a conference with a large proportion of delegates with mobility impairments.

- References to the National Retired Members' Committee – answers to questions on the annual report indicate national committee does not necessarily pay our references any attention and suggests they be re-raised as references from Regional Retired Members Committees. Motion next year to address this issue?
- National Retired Members' Committee Sue Salzedo will not seek re-election. This highlights that there is no LGBT place, as such, on the committee.
- National LGBT Conference, Brighton, 17-19 November
Kevin Perkins and Janet Royston will be this year's delegates.
- Doorkeeping – again!

UNISON DISABLED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE, 28 – 30 OCTOBER 2017 REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES

The Retired Members' Organisation was represented by Sheila Crosby (NRMC) and Denise Lightbody (Scotland).

On Saturday I attended the workshop on PIP and Universal Credit and they are indeed complicated benefits and despite the difficulties already encountered in the pilot areas, are being rolled out all over the country.

Even if you have been awarded DLA for life, on being transferred to PIP the maximum award is for ten years before reassessment. The advice was: if you have been refused, seek the advice of a Welfare Benefits Worker prior to appealing.

Universal Credit payments are made 4 weekly to those over 18 and under Pension age (currently 66). You must engage with the dwp. The benefit is claimed on line as are appointments. No consideration is given to those persons who do not have a computer and those who are not computer literate. Students at university can claim if they live on campus.

You must be available for work. Work Capability Assessment Status (which means you do not have to look for jobs all the time) can take between 13 weeks and 6 months to acquire.

If holidays are taken then you are not available for work and you lose the benefit for that period.

Rent arrears can accumulate because the benefit is paid to the claimant not the landlord, so if other debts are pressing, then the money may well get used elsewhere.

None of this made from happy hearing.

Hilary Mellow chaired the welcome meeting, she explained Conference procedure and explained how motions are debated. She introduced those people on the

platform, mainly the National Committee and expressed the wish that those who had attended the caucus meetings and workshops had found them useful.

Session 1 Sunday.

Maggie Griffin (National Disabled Members' Committee) in the Chair: she introduced the President, Margaret McKee, Gordon McKay, Senior Vice President and Gloria Mills, National Secretary for Equalities.

We were asked to observe a minute of silence for those who had died during the course of the year. Rodney Bickerstaffe was specially mentioned.

The Standing Orders report was accepted. There were no questions.

Jean Sowley presented the Annual Report. The questions on the report had been responded to in writing.

The President, Margaret McKee addressed Conference and spoke of her working life as a Catering Assistant at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. She was there for 38 years. She talked of the challenges of leaving the EU and how our public services rely on overseas workers.

Her main object for her Presidential Year is to campaign to get the public sector pay cap removed.

Motion 1 Revised Constitution, this was carried.

The mover mentioned the fact that a rule change would be needed to get more seats on the NEC.

Motion 2 Working with Disabled Members, this was carried with little debate.

Motion 3 Towards a Disabled Workers' Charter, this was carried. Much emphasis was placed on the fact that leave was having to be taken to attend medical appointments.

Motion 4 Individually Tailored Reasonable Adjustment Agreements, this was carried. It was explained that a Reasonable Adjustment Agreement was called a passport and once in place should stay in place and not have to be repeated to every new line manager.

Motion 5 Organising for Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) Users, this was carried. Difficulties are being experienced by those wishing to become involved in UNISON at every level. BSL users need and wish to be more engaged.

Motion 6 UNISON Working for Intersex Equality, this was carried. The mover of the motion made an effort to explain about the variations of sex characteristics (intersex) and called on disabled members' groups and branches to be supportive of this group of members.

Motion 7 Hidden Apparent Disabilities, this was carried. Quite a lot of debate on deafness, sleep disorder and other things that cannot be seen. Broken arms etc are so much more visible. The difficulties of wondering whether one can sit on a seat for the disabled when there is nothing to see? Should one carry a card to display the disability?

Motion 8 Reasonable Adjustments, this was carried. The issue here seems to be the time lag as the employers do not keep a timescale.

Motion 9 Pensions, this was carried. BSL users are having great difficulty in getting pension information from the West Yorkshire Fund and also information on the State Pension. We were asked to take this back to branches to see what can be done to help. The motion called for UNISON to produce a BSL version of advice on pensions as a whole.

Motion 10 Perception of Black People and Mental Health, this was carried. Evidence suggests that Black people are more likely to be detained because of mental health problems. A Black mental health champion is being called for.

Motion 11 Hate Incidents and "Mate Crimes", this was carried. All incidents should be reported. A good policy is "be kind to yourself and be kind to others". We must have justice for all hate crime including disability as well as racist hate crime.

Motion 12 Disabled Women in Politics, this was carried. There are 13 million disabled people in the UK. Women with disability are hit the hardest. We have too few MPs supporting disabled people. We need to support the TUC, UNISON and the Labour Party in their campaigns to help disabled people to gain office. The average age of a white male councillor is 60.

Motion 13 Mental Health Awareness in the Workplace, this was carried. There are 400,000 off with stress related issues. Mental health is not taken seriously. We must work for a policy on mental health. Raising mental health awareness in the workplace is a must. The Mental Health Champions in Wales are a huge success.

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary sent a video message explaining why he could not be at the Conference. He was chairing a Public Services International (PSI) meeting on the fight against Universal Credit.

Roger McKenzie, UNISON Assistant General Secretary spoke fervently on equality.

Motion 14 Disabled Members' Right to Healthcare in Europe, this was carried. It seems that it has now been decided that if you are in Europe on Brexit Day you will be covered as at present.

Motion 15 A Safe Environment for All, this was carried. There is a need for service users and service providers to have more information. Service users need to know where to go and providers need to know what to provide.

Motion 16 Institutionalisation is not social care, this was carried. We must raise awareness of the effect institutionalisation has on disabled people.

Motion 17 Are Cheaper Medicines Better?, this was carried. When doctors change prescriptions issued by specialist, this usually relates to cost and the changes can have a bad affect on some patients.

Motion 18 Disabled are Very Much Abled, this was carried. Discrimination in the workplace through lack of understanding of the law. Guidance needs to be issued and disabled members involved in any consultation.

Motion 19 Hate Crime Against LGBT Disabled People, this was carried. Only 57% of hate crimes reported are recorded and LGBT hate crimes are less likely to attract a sentence.

Motion 20 Invisible Disability, this was carried. Those with invisible disability have problems with people who cannot see the disability. If you do not look disabled, it does not mean that you are not. It was suggested that those with hidden disability should have a leaflet to explain this to the doubters.

Grace Moronfolu, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) spoke at length on hate crimes. It seems that the Police investigate the crime and provide case papers to Police and Justice who then make decisions about the charge. They decide whether the case and what evidence can be produced in court. CPS cannot force the Police to produce evidence. They do not decide on the sentence.

Motion 21 Autism in the Workplace, this was carried. The use of Project Choice was advocated.

Motion 22 Accessible Travel Options Ticketless Train Travel, this was carried. Not everyone has a smart phone and this is going to cause a lot of problems for older and less able people.

Motion 23 Universal Credit, this was carried. Universal Credit continues to be rolled out. Waiting time is in excess of six weeks, meanwhile debt mounts and food banks are used. Part time work and zero hours contracts make it hard for some disabled members to manage their money.

Motion 24 Mandatory Re-consideration is Mandatory Refusal, this was carried. Transferring to PIP which is not based on support needs but based on Government targets to reduce benefits is not beneficial to disabled people.

Motion 25 Defending the Rights to Mobility as Thousands have Disability Vehicles Taken Away, this was carried. A court case taken against a council had been won.

Time ran out and motions 26, 27, 28 and Emergency Motions 1 and 2 were not heard.

Report submitted by Sheila C. Crosby

UNISON NATIONAL BLACK MEMBERS' CONFERENCE, 19 – 21 JANUARY 2018 REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES

The Retired Members' Organisation was represented by Mirza Hamie (North West) and Norma Thompson (South West).

I attended the Unison NBMC on behalf of National Retired Members Organisation. The first day of conference was taken up with a self-organised group meeting, Regional meetings and service group meetings. 650 members attended the conference.

The conference was opened and chaired by the new chair Ash Dhobi, Councillor Malcolm Kennedy, Lord Mayor of Liverpool gave an inspiration speech to the delegates, it was his first time to a Unison Conference, and he echo the words enjoy the city of Liverpool.

Guest Speaker

Dave Prentis, Unison's General Secretary addressed the conference. He started his speech about the private construction and Services Company Carillion collapse. He spoke also about lauded Black history in the UK – a history that, just this past year, saw former UNISON president Eleanor Smith elected as an MP in what was once the Parliamentary seat of Enoch Powell.

He reminded delegates that 2018 sees the union mark 25 years since it was formed from Cohse, Nalگو and Nupe – and he urged all present to be fully involved in the celebrations. But it was about more than just celebrating the union's first quarter of a century – “we owe it to everyone to be even better” in the future, Mr Prentis declared. To loud cheers, he declared that, “if Donald Trump ever dares to visit our country ... be in no doubt, UNISON will be leading those protests”.

Everyone settled down to hear the motions, the first motion National Young Members Forum.

On Saturday morning the guest speaker President Margaret Mc Kee made a rallying call to delegates. Building the union was essential, she said, because of “the challenges we face from the Westminster government ... a government determined to undermine working people”. All UNISON members had “shared values,” observed Ms McKee. Let us “make sure this is a world where all people ... are treated with dignity and respect.”

Mandela award presented to Yvonne, councillor and `unison member from Birmingham Receiving her award from the union's president, Margaret McKee, at Black members' conference in Liverpool, Ms Mosquito was particularly keen to thank Birmingham branch for nominating her.

Eleanor Smith MP Guest speaker. “I can feel the love – and it's energising me.” For former president Eleanor Smith, now the MP for Wolverhampton South West, it had all the emotion Of a homecoming she said that she was determined to “be the voice of the voiceless – to help the people in my community that are homeless ... young

people; to help them seek and Our former president encouraged delegates at Black members' conference this weekend to get politically active to build hope & change to be what they want to be. Have what they want to achieve.”

Ms Smith said that she hoped that her own story – still in the making – had inspired the audience. “You can achieve anything you want to ... but you can't do it on your own, you need others. But don't think that you're going to be on your own ... we're fortunate we have UNISON.”

And she concluded with a final ‘thank you,’ before leaving the rostrum to a standing ovation.

The motions debated at conference were grouped into the following.
Recruitment and Organisation,
Negotiating and Bargaining,
Campaigns.

Key motions of interest debated at the conference, there were good speakers on the motions.

The National Young Members Forum's Mental Health & Employment. Delegate talked about her battle with depression.

Rahman from the national disabled members committee moving motion 15 'hate crimes and mate crimes' this motion drew attention to the fact that there has been a rise in hate crimes and underreported in mate crimes.

Motion 4: How far have we come, It is the 50th anniversary of the race relations act and what has changed in the last 50 years. In Wales there are no black MP's/CEO of public service.

Fringe meetings, workshops and caucus meetings
I attended the hate crime fringe meeting which was thought provoking and informative, taking part in 5 case studies.

The day ended with a social evening at the Hilton Hotel.

On Sunday morning conference resumed.

There were 24 motions debated over 3 days an carried. With amendments which was carried as amended. 1 withdrawn.

Conference ran out of time as a result of which 4 motions were not reached and were unable to be heard and will therefore be referred to the National Black Members Committee for consideration.

Gary Williams has helped smooth running of so many conferences. This weekend was his last conference before retirement, the chair wish him well and said that Gary would be sadly missed and wishes him a very long and happy retirement. National Black Members' Conference 2019 will be held in Llandudno, Wales.

Norma Thompson

Representing National Retired Members Organisation at National Black Members Conference.

BLACK MEMBERS' CAUCUS, UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE 2017

New delegates, delegates and visitors were welcome to the 2017 Black members Caucus meeting here in Llandudno. After a discussion I (Norma Thompson) was asked to chair the meeting.

This is an area where we as retired black members can make a positive impact in campaigning for change. 17 members, 1 new member attended the caucus meeting. Email addresses/ telephone numbers were given to me from members to contact them with what was discussed at this meeting.

There was discussion, including the following question, comments, and concerns.

Question: why are retired black people not coming forward to join the union?

Factors were brought up:

1. It was suggested people were not joining the retirement members group after retirement and not enough representation of black members.
2. No awareness of that unison has a National Retirement Members section and the branches has retired members groups.
3. It was suggested pre-retirement classes to be encouraged in the workplaces.
4. Publicity, could be published in branch news bulletin, face book, website and in the workplace.
5. Improving communication between members and branches.

There followed a debate about having a collection for Caribbean relief hurricane fund.

How do we contact other members?

Why is there a reluctant to attend conferences or join Unison?

(Some members move away after retirement. Return overseas or Bereavement)

Are retired staffs joining other groups?

Members at the meeting were reminded that the caucus meetings are informal meetings open to retired members who identify themselves as belonging to the black members group.

Norma Thompson
Retired Members Secretary, Wiltshire and Avon Health Branch

UNISON NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, 1 – 3 FEBRUARY 2018 REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES

The Retired Members' Organisation was represented by Rosie MacGregor (NRMC) and Sue Salzedo (East Midlands).

Women's Conference was held in Liverpool from Thursday afternoon to Saturday lunchtime. Comprising four conference sessions, service group, regional and caucus meetings plus seminars, hustings and fringe meetings. A total of 540 delegates and 250 visitors attended the conference.

There were 37 Motions on the agenda of which 3 were composites and 3 others formed part of a grouped debate and there was 1 Emergency Motion on the dangers facing women refugees. We managed to complete the agenda but the use of more grouped debates might have prevented speaking times being reduced on the final morning. The Standing Orders Committee will consider a prioritisation process for 2019.

Tributes were paid at the start to Rodney Bickerstaff (former General Secretary), Irene Stacey (NEC) and Cliff Williams (Assistant General Secretary) who had all recently died.

Conference guest speakers included UNISON President Margaret McKee who was delighted that there were so many new delegates and went on to speak movingly about her presidential year charity of choice. Rosemount House is a residential home for homeless men suffering from addiction and mental health problems which had supported her youngest son for a short time before his death and now offers a facility for women.

Dave Prentis spoke of recent cases where women had been exploited, abused and denigrated and was proud that "equality is at the heart of our union" and that of the 160,000 new members in the last 12 months 80% were women.

The highlight was Dr Helen Pankhurst, great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst and granddaughter of Sylvia, given that conference celebrated 100 years since the Representation of the People Act of 1918. She said that even after 100 years improvements still need to be made particularly with regard to politics, money, identity, culture and violence against women. There was a standing ovation for each of these and for the Birmingham Care Workers forced to take strike action because they are at breaking point after years of cuts.

Debate centred on a number of key issues including union organisation, childcare, women's health, safe travel, sexism, hate crime and misogyny and various seminars provided further information and support.

There were many excellent debates and with no exceptions the speakers were all knowledgeable and supportive of each other, even when they failed to agree over some of the more contentious issues which included support for mental health first aid training which was carried; legalisation of prostitution which was lost and non-binary inclusion which was carried.

Conference deplored the government decision to limit child tax credit to the first two children and the 'rape clause' that stigmatises the child and forces the woman to prove that she has been raped.

Your two delegates representing NRMCA agreed to speak on a number of motions that we considered relevant and our interventions were all well received. We felt that we had really made the voice of retired members heard and supported Young Members who are the future of our union. Rosie spoke on Getting Young Women Involved; Recognising Women's Health in an Ageing Workforce; Safe Travel for Women; Carers the Forgotten Members; and Femicide; and Sue spoke on Mentoring and Developing Women; and Removing the Stigma of STEM subject study to Increase Female Participation.

Jenny Forbes-Reid who is one of the representatives from the NEC on the NRMCA proved to be an excellent Chair during the conference.

We left feeling inspired and ready for next year's conference in Bournemouth!

Report by Sue Salzedo and Rosie MacGregor

UNISON NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE, 19-22 JUNE 2018

UNISON's 25th National Delegate Conference was held in Brighton in June. The weather hot and sunny and there was a celebratory mood given that UNISON is now 25 years old.

The National Retired Members delegates were Rosie MacGregor and Val Graham from the NRMCA and representatives, the majority women, from each of the 12 UNISON regions – Suze Oldfield (Eastern), Fran Street (East Midlands), Allen Hawley (Greater London), Eileen Thompson (Northern), Mary Ferris (Northern Ireland), Paul Wiggins (North West), Marie Macrae (Scotland), Terence Martin (South Eastern), Elizabeth Payne-Ahmadi (South West), Thomas Beedle (Wales), Malcolm Swan (West Midlands) and Irene Willson (Yorkshire & Humberside).

We worked well together and our message was clear that we are prepared to speak in support of our working colleagues as well as making our own demands. We are equally supportive of our young members who are the future of our union.

National Delegate Conference days 1 and 2- Val Graham

Conference opened with a welcome from President Margaret McKee to all the delegates and guests from our international union family. There were representatives of sister unions in Norway, Sweden, Turkey, Korea, Colombia, Brazil and Cuba.

There followed a minutes silence and moving tribute to all the union activists who had died in the past Year.

Margaret Mc Kee addressed conference and spoke about how many of the events we marked in 2018 were still with us today. Women had won votes in 1918 but still lacked rights and equal pay. May 1968 had brought hope but many of the battles were still to be won. Enoch Powell could have been the architect of the appalling mistreatment of the Windrush generation. Despite huge job losses the union was growing and must be responsive to members needs especially the most vulnerable. She spoke touchingly about the recent killing of a Palestinian nurse and that of her own son.

We received a report from Standing Orders Committee explaining how it worked, its decisions and about questions and reference back followed by the NECs annual report introduced by Gordon Mc Kaye who later was advised to go to Specsavers next time he needed glasses. He was proud that the union had broken the pay cap and that Unison was now the largest union in the UK. The union had 17000 new members and was growing. He mentioned work on EU exit, and rights for EU members, the Ethical Care Charter, NHS and May 12th TUC marches.

The Financial Statement was a little less optimistic as subscription income is down and inflation up. There are charges for the Certification officer and to employers for DOCAS agreements. Only one small employer has refused to agree. Recruitment is key and helping branches to manage funds effectively.

We then moved into debate of 2 motions prioritising issues affecting Northern Ireland especially the threat to the Good Friday Agreement and the importance of full implementation. Human rights and equality issues focused mainly on the need to restore devolved government and support a Bill of Rights including abortion rights. Both motions were passed.

The afternoon began with debate on Low Pay and Women in Unison. The amended motion called on the union to take positive action to involve more low paid women workers in the unions and prioritise their concerns including a how they are described.

Before Dave Prentis addressed us we were reminded in film of the past 25 years of Unison, what we have achieved and how awesome we are together. Dave introduced Michael affected by the Governments attack on the Windrush generation and their children and offered him the union's protection.

He spoke about many of the unions achievements in the past 25 years., fighting for jobs, equal pay, against racism, against tribunal fees, for ethical care and the NHS. He spoke about the International work of the union especially on Palestinian rights.

The union had been consistent in all this whatever the Government. It had no supported Tony Blair and did support Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Leader. He urged members to support the June 30th NHS March and commended the motion which sought a review of the union to ensure it was fit for the next 25 years.

Appropriately we debated and passed a motion on the Crisis in Health and Social Care. Rosie Mc Gregor spoke on behalf of the RMO and was very well received. The motion called for adequate funding, the return of social care to the public sector and support for care workers and their campaigns. A motion calling for Unison to hold a special one day conference to debate health and social care was lost.

Last business of the day was a debate on promoting the union as an organising union. The union was tasked with reporting back on proposals to increase member engagement in all sectors including private and voluntary sectors and increase the number of activists.

Wednesday marked the importance of Young Members and an award in memory of Eric Roberts went to Welsh Young members for their Respect Young Members campaign.

Making 2019 the Year of Young members was the next motion passed aiming to increase young member numbers and activists over the year. Rosie Mc Gregor emphasising her youthfulness brought a message of solidarity between the generations and younger members gave her the thumbs up.

Then we moved on to the exciting part. Strategic Review of Unison was moved by Dave Prentis and Retired Members supported a review including of our role within the union. Rosie moved an amendment to include the RMO within the review but the debate indicated real concern from delegates about the centralisation of branch funding. A card vote was in the air but Gordon Mc Kaye's glasses saw more ayes than noes. Mine saw the opposite but I wasn't chairing. In the end the card vote won and so did the noes by about 2 to 1. So back to square 1 and no review for us this time.

We debated the crisis in local government and supported a motion calling for members to promote public services and campaign for them widely.

Wednesday afternoon and it's the European Union debate with members wondering what to make of the various Brexits politicians go on about. We supported a n EU deal which benefits workers and our public and health services. EU members are still feeling uncertain about their future in the UK and the union is supporting free movement and security for them.

We passed a motion to ensure that exit from the EU does not have an adverse impact on devolution settlements in the regions.

The last two motions of the day were on Race Equality and Inclusion on our Union. Delegates agreed to continue to challenge racism and promote equality in the union, workplaces and at a political level. It were impressive that so many excellent black activists spoke about their experiences. They also supported measures to improve

equality outcomes in the workplace and to ensure the union is responsive to the needs of non binary members.

Sadly Jeremy Corbyn did not come to speak. Parliament was even more exciting than a Strategic Review of Unison.

International issues were debated on Thursday morning.

The keynote speaker was Lorretta Johnson, Secretary of the American Federation of Teachers, and “a proud African American”, whose rousing speech brought delegates to their feet. In, not the first reference from the rostrum to the old UNISON ants and bears advert, first from Dave Prentis and later from me, she ended by saying “I’ve been a fighter all my life, if you see me in a fight with a bear, help the bear”!

Composite B – Palestine. End the Detention of Children was carried overwhelmingly and one of our retired member delegates, Liz Payne-Ahmadi, spoke with compassion and understanding about the plight of young people and health workers killed at the Gaza border by Israeli soldiers. She ended her speech by saying “I was 14 years old when this occupation first started, and I’m an older woman now. I think it’s important that we don’t only put pressure on the Israeli government, but also put pressure on the US government, on the British government that supports it, and on other governments that support it.”

After the international debates we then heard about the deepening housing crisis.

Motion 45 – Housing Affordability is a growing concern for public sector workers was carried as amended with our own amendment 45.2 which related to the impact of lack of housing that results in NHS and care workers being forced to move away or give up their careers. These are the staff that we as older people rely on and Rosie highlighted the impact of staff shortages on the elderly in moving the amendment.

Thursday afternoon at Conference is always dedicated to Rule Changes and it can produce some of the best speeches and interesting debates.

Terence Martin, another of our retired member delegates, spoke with clarity in support of the role of women in the debate on Rule G - Branch Officers to include a Women’s Officer which was clearly carried.

Rosie found to her surprise that she was the only speaker in support from the floor in the debate on Rule C - Honorary Members. She highlighted the importance of our union being able to expel those who had been granted honorary life membership if their actions subsequently proved incompatible with our aims and aspirations. Rosie compared Nelson Mandela, who had been an inspiration to us all, with Aung San Suu Kyi. We had welcomed her as an honorary life member but her subsequent actions in failing to speak out against the violence metered out by Myanmar's military on the Rohingya people was unworthy of UNISON. This was clearly carried and the union will now be able to expel Aung San Suu Kyi.

We had two speakers intending to oppose Rule D – Retired Members Organisation which called for retired members to be eligible for election as Branch Welfare or International Officers but we failed to reach this on the agenda. Our position is that

branch officers should be working members and that we as retired members have a different role within branches and the union.

On the fringe on Thursday evening the screening of the film Nae Pasaran about the Scottish workers at Rolls Royce in East Kilbride who defied Pinochet proved for most of us emotionally overwhelming. The act of solidarity of these workers with the people of Chile, in boycotting repairs to war plane engines, grounded the Chilean air force during the brutal fascist dictatorship. It was a lesson in how the few can stand together against the might of an oppressor. The terrible impact of the coup and the horrors thereafter reduced many in the audience to tears. Seeing three of those workers, now pensioners, who were still living receiving their awards to become Commanders of the Republic of Chile from the Chilean ambassador brought such prolonged applause from our audience that afterwards the filmmaker Felipe Bustos Sierra, the son of a Chilean exile, had barely any time to answer questions from the audience before we had to leave the conference centre.

Friday's debates were perhaps the most moving and emotionally charged of the whole conference.

Motion 48 – Justice for Grenfell was carried unanimously with particularly moving speeches from the Branch Secretary of Kensington and Chelsea Branch and from those who had been working at the front line yet had suffered abuse from the public including being called “murderers”.

Angela Rayner spoke with warmth and humour on Friday morning saying it was an honour to be back at a UNISON conference. She said she was “not born into the movement but made in it” and proud of her union in paying tribute to striking workers. “Our union, strong, confident and with one voice” for all workers. “We all do better when we work together” and “the work you do supports lives, and saves lives.”

There were more standing ovations for Angela and for the Wigan NHS strikers who are fighting for their jobs and to defend the NHS. Hazel from Wigan Hospital spoke of the need to remain part of the NHS rather than joining a new privatised organisation.

We received a recorded message from Jeremy Corbyn on Friday afternoon saying he was sorry to miss the conference but had urgent business challenging the Tories. He promised a national care service if Labour gets into power.

Emergency Motion 9 – Justice for the Windrush Generation was carried unanimously. It was preceded by a short video – Michael's Story about a former teaching assistant and UNISON member who after 50 years in the UK had lost his job because he was unable to prove he had the right to remain.

Our two National Retired Members Motions regrettably failed to be reached despite being re-prioritised. Motion 44 - Dignity in Social Care – People before Profit, Building for the Future was 9th on the agenda for Friday afternoon and Motion 78 – Triple Lock on State Pensions was 19th on the agenda.

RETIRED MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

Following a fall in retired membership due to a data cleansing operation, during the last year, membership has increased from 162,866 to 163,706.

MONITORING AND FAIR REPRESENTATION FORMS

The monitoring and fair representation forms from the 2017 UNISON Retired Members' Conference provided the following information:

- There were 79 new delegates, compared to 75 the previous year.
- 52% of delegates were women, compared to 55% the previous year.
- 80% identified as white, compared to 86% the previous year.
- 24% identified as disabled, compared to 21% the previous year.
- 1% identified as lesbian (same as previous year).
- 5% identified as bisexual (1% the previous year).
- 3% identified as gay (1% the previous year).
- 1% identified as transgender (same as previous year).
- Participation by delegates in the various self organised groups was as follows:
 - Black members 4% (3% the previous year)
 - Disabled members 5% (same as previous year)
 - LGBT members 2% (same as previous year)
 - Women members 17% (23% the previous year)
- Delegates belonged to service groups as follows:
 - Local government 53% (56% the previous year)
 - Health 26% (27% the previous year)
 - Higher Education 8% (7% the previous year)
 - Energy 2% (3% the previous year)
 - Police & Justice 5% (7% the previous year)
 - Water 3% (2% the previous year)

- Community 3% (same as previous year)
- Sectors were represented as follows:
 - Public sector 91% (90% the previous year)
 - Private sector 6% (7% the previous year)
 - Voluntary sector 2% (3% the previous year)
- Occupational groups were represented as follows:
 - Managers 18% (16% the previous year)
 - Technical 8% (same as the previous year)
 - Professional 29% (same as the previous year)
 - Personal & caring services 13% (6% the previous year)
 - Administration 14% (17% the previous year)
 - Clerical & secretarial 11% (10% the previous year)
 - Other non-manual 3% (same as the previous year)
 - Other manual 6% (7% the previous year)
 - Other occupations 3% (4% the previous year)
- Age groups were represented as follows:

50 – 59	6% (4% the previous year)
60 – 65	20% (21% the previous year)
66 – 70	35% (32% the previous year)
71 – 80	33% (31% the previous year)
80 +	6% (Same as the previous year)

ACTION TAKEN ON MOTIONS CARRIED AT THE 2017 UNISON NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

MOTION 1. COMBATING LONELINESS IN OLD AGE

In January 2018 the government appointed the Minister for Sport and Civil Society, Tracey Crouch to lead a cross-government group with responsibility for driving action on loneliness across all parts of government.

The Prime Minister has given a commitment that a cross-government strategy on tackling loneliness will be published later this year and that work has begun on establishing a fund to encourage innovative and community-based solutions and scaling up of existing work offering practical and emotional support to help lonely individuals reconnect with their communities.

The National Retired Members' Committee will respond as appropriate to this strategy when it is published.

MOTION 2. ADVOCACY SUPPORT SERVICES FOR RETIREMENT HOME RESIDENTS

Some years ago, a programme was set up called Experts by Experience. Initially this was co-ordinated by Help the Aged, with the aim of recruiting older people to go into care homes as lay inspectors. It is unclear how widespread this work actually was or how many people undertook inspections. Moreover, these individuals were without any real regulatory power.

However, the organisation Relatives and Residents Association have undertaken a considerable amount of work in the area of advocacy for those in care and nursing homes. The National Retired Members' Committee will be liaising with this organisation with regard to the issues raised in the motion.

MOTION 3. SOCIAL CARE

The National Retired Members' Committee are working to involve retired members in the Care Workers for Change campaign by formulating an action plan for distribution to regions. It should be noted that the campaign has been running for 18 months and is ongoing.

The Retired Members' Organisation was represented at the UNISON Social Care Seminar held on 16 January 2018.

A UNISON speaker addressed the NPC Pensioners' Parliament in June and explained what the Care Workers for Change campaign had achieved to date.

MOTION 4. DIGNITY IN SOCIAL CARE, PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT, BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

This motion was submitted to the National Delegate Conference as motion 44. Unfortunately it was not reached and will be referred to the NEC.

MOTION 5. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ACTION ON A RESOLUTION TAKES MORE THAN TWELVE MONTHS?

With regard to motion 29 submitted in 2013, the NEC view is that it would not be appropriate for retired members to elect members of the NEC as the majority of the NEC's role relates either directly or indirectly to the employment issues and representation of members in the workplace.

The proposal in the motion would result in a union which was less representative of its members rather than more representative. Therefore the NEC has no plans to introduce either retired member seats on the NEC or retired member voting for NEC seats.

With regard to motion 26 submitted in 2014, the National Retired Members' Committee would like to report on the issues raised in the motion as follows:

Computer skills training has been provided on a regional basis.

Statistics on Welfare applications analysed by age have been provided previously. A workshop was also planned for this year's retired members' conference to look at how to encourage more Welfare applications from retired members.

UNISONPlus will be asked if they can provide any age analysis of take-up of their services.

The issue of loneliness will be the subject of this year's panel debate.

MOTION 6. HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

As part of the National Retired Members' Committee's ongoing work on housing for older people, the following response was made to the draft NPC Housing Policy:

UNISON supports the broad thrust of the policy document, however, we believe that it could be strengthened to take into account the following comments/suggestions highlighted (in red text) below:

Recommendations (Pages 1 – 4)

1. 65,000 houses need to be built every year for older people in order to meet the current demand and the projected population rise

This figure is based on the common consensus that we need 250,000 houses in total across the population, and that by 2040 one in four households will be headed by someone over the age of 65. The picture on specialist housing for older people is one of under supply and need a 75% increase in specialist properties by 2035 if we are to meet a growing older population. An urgent house building programme is therefore needed to match this under supply with the growing demand. This should include both sheltered and supported housing options, older LGBT housing projects and lifetime homes that can adapt around the resident as they age. Older people's housing needs to be affordable, accessible, safe and located close to good quality public transport links and other essential amenities such as GP surgeries, shops and post offices. In addition, the housing needs to be well designed with the intention to create sustainable communities. This could be achieved by allocating government funding for older people homes and only accepting bids for this type of housing.

Comment

1. By 2033 13 million households will be headed by someone over 65; an increase of 40 per cent from 2008.
 2. It is not helpful to suggest that the government should only accept bids for older people's housing as suggested in the last sentence of "Recommendation Point 1" in the policy document. This is not a position UNISON would support. UNISON wants to see everybody's housing needs met.
 3. The text reads: "The picture on specialist housing for older people is one of under supply and need a 75% increase in specialist properties by 2035 if we are to meet a growing older population"?
 4. There are currently only approximately 462,565 specialist homes for older people (based on the research for government for its current review of funding for supported housing) which implies a need for 345,000 specialist properties by 2035.
 5. To facilitate the delivery of new homes, specialist housing should be designated as a sub-category of the C2 planning classification, or be assigned a new use class (Housing Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Select Committee recommendation)).
 6. Specialist housing for older people is largely developed by housing associations but the capacity and confidence of those providers to continue to develop specialist housing has been affected by recent proposals by government to change the way people can receive help with their housing costs. New housing developments have stalled and serious concerns have been raised about the ongoing viability of many existing schemes as the proposals will affect existing as well as new residents. This risks the potential loss of specialist housing for older people at a time when significantly more is needed.
 7. The proposal will lead to the level of support individuals can receive through housing benefit or universal credit being capped at the relevant local housing allowance (LHA) rate, with additional monies to top up funding being held by local authorities. This will result in considerable regional disparities in levels of funding due to the differentials in LHA rates across the country, and therefore potentially the levels of, and access to, specialist housing for older people, depending on where they live.
 8. Should NPC argue for specialist housing for older people to be excluded from the framework at least until the full roll out of universal credit, as the debate on how housing costs for people of pension age has not yet taken place
 9. There is nothing about standards HCLG Select Committee recommends - All new homes should be built to the Category 2 Building Regulations standard so that they are 'age proofed' and can meet the current and future needs of older people.
2. Enable Local Authorities to build houses again by setting up their own housing company

Councils should be encouraged to set up their own housing companies, which would be able to buy land and borrow cheaply from the council. Any profits generated would then go straight back to the community and future building programmes. For

example, Brick by Brick was set up by the Croydon Council in 2016 as a way of building affordable housing. Not only does this approach provide housing; it provides jobs, a skilled workforce and new communities.

3. Fast track building applications for those developers who propose affordable and suitable accommodation for older people

Property developers have got away for too long with not building their proposed allocation of affordable accommodation, through the use of “viability assessments”. A first step would be to make these public to allow for greater accountability. In addition, local authorities should be given new legal powers to fast track planning applications from developers who propose affordable and suitable accommodation for older people, ensure that affordable accommodation is included in the first phase of any construction programme and introduce an agreed quota of older people’s housing in all developments.

Comment

- 1. The paragraph says little about the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the role of Local Housing Plans**
- 2. Councils should publish a strategy explaining how they intend to meet the housing needs of older people in their area and, in their Local Plans, identify a target proportion of new housing to be developed for older people along with suitable, well-connected sites for it.**

4. Ensure older people are at the heart of planning decisions

It is clear then that ensuring a larger number of older people are able to live in housing that has a design and ethos suitable to supporting and creating sociable communities, is going to be an increasingly crucial part of future housing policy. More broadly, this thinking should be extended to underpin a more creative and community-focused approach to planning, which better reflects the specific needs of different demographics. For example, through the creation of “cities for all ages”, we should ensure that public transport, public spaces and even street furniture are designed to better enable older people to remain socially, physically and mentally active.

Comment

See above.

5. Introduce a Stamp Duty holiday for older people

There has been a constant suggestion that many older people are occupying homes that are now either too big for their needs or too difficult for them to maintain. Whilst the decision to downsize should be one of choice rather than compulsion, introducing a three-year stamp duty holiday for older people right sizing into homes under £200,000 could release up to 111,000 properties for younger families. The

effectiveness of this measure could then be reviewed and assessed after the three-year period had elapsed.

Comment

1. Currently there is no stamp duty on the first £125,000 and it is 2% on the next £125,000. If a first time buyer is buying an older person's home they do not need to pay any stamp duty if the price is up to £300,000. Not sure about this policy.

6. Improve the financial situation of downsizers

Whilst older people should never be forced to move, it is essential that for those who want to, help is available. Alongside this, it is important that free information is available, both online and in print, which offers advice about how to start the process of moving to a new house. In addition, further investigation and regulation into the Equity Release market needs to be considered. These forms of loans come with high interest rates and are costing older people tens of thousands of pounds. It is essential that alternative forms of finance are made available for people who want to right size their home.

7. Stronger rights for older tenants

Some tenants are living in unsafe and poor conditions and are discouraged from reporting, since some landlords fail to take action, while other tenants worry of retaliatory eviction. This suggests renters lack basic consumer power to bargain for decent conditions of renting. To gain confidence in the rental market, a Tenants Charter should be introduced to raise awareness of tenant rights. These rights should include the availability of longer tenancies of up to three years, an end to letting agent fees and an agreed formula for rent increases.

In addition, landlords should be required to register with the local authority for a five year licence to rent their property out. To receive a licence, landlords would have to demonstrate their ability to maintain their property to pre-agreed standards with the council. Landlords should be required to put in place robust tenancy management arrangements, giving more safeguards and greater protection to tenants and the council would have the power to fine landlords who fail to register with the scheme and recover any rents or housing benefits paid while a property was not licensed.

Comment

1. The commentary says *'These rights should include the availability of longer tenancies of up to three years'*. This is not sufficient.

The Scottish Government has introduced a new form of tenancy that applies to all new tenancies created on or after 1 December 2017. A private residential tenancy is one that will

- **be an open-ended tenancy, which means a landlord will no longer be able to ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed term has ended**

- **provide more predictable rents and protection for tenants against excessive rent increases**
- **include the ability to introduce local rent caps for rent pressure areas**

UNISON could suggest that the Government should consider introducing private residential tenancies in England

8. End the right to buy policy

Whilst acknowledging that right to buy enabled thousands of people in the 1980s and beyond who would otherwise have been unable to buy their own home, it nevertheless seriously depleted the stock of social housing and now needs to be abandoned, in order for more people to access social housing and relieve the pressure on waiting lists.

9. End the 'Bedroom Tax' for all social tenants

Housing benefit claimants in social rented housing do not experience a reduction in their entitlement if they occupy a home that is deemed to be larger than they need if they are over the state pension age. However, the policy is widely regarded as punitive and regressive and should now be removed from social tenant of all ages.

10. Change the definition of affordable housing

The government definition of affordable housing states it must be provided at a level at which the mortgage payments on the property should be more than would be paid in rent on council housing, but below market levels. This is no longer fit for purpose. Instead, affordable housing should be defined as when an individual is paying anything up to 35% of net income (after tax and benefits) on housing costs. By adopting this new definition, regional differences and incomes can be taken into account.

Comment

1. UNISON does not recognise the definition set out above. The National Planning Policy Framework defines affordable housing as:

Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent

rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing.

Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

- 2. UNISON agrees with the NPC that the definition “is not fit for purpose” – it’s too wide. Not sure UNISON would support the “35% net income (after tax and benefits) approach” – wider debate needed. What happens in Canary Wharf?**

11. Reinstate the ring-fenced Supporting People Programme

The needs of older residents can be addressed by obliging local authorities to take the actions necessary to ensure older and disabled people can live independently in safe and secure homes, and as a result, reducing costs to the NHS from illnesses and injuries caused by poor quality homes. The Supporting People Programme was launched in 2003 as a scheme which helps vulnerable and older people to carry on living independently in their own homes. Initially, this fund was ring fenced, but in 2009 this protection was removed. Concerns have been voiced that local authorities are using their Supporting People grant to fund other expenditure – across 152 local authorities, Supporting People funding had been withdrawn entirely from 305 services, and reduced for a further 685 services. Given that the programme has in the past produced £3.41 billion savings in NHS and social care costs, it is time the government reinstated its ring-fencing.

Comment

- 1. This is a bit like after the horse has bolted. Councils have cut the budgets that were previously paid for by using supporting people grant – as the paragraph explains. Re-instating ring fencing does not bring that money back and is unlikely to protect very much, what is needed is proper funding.**

Section on Social Housing (Pages 10-14)

See pages 10-14 in policy document.

Comment

- 1. UNISON suggests that this section could be expanded to include the financial barriers, restrictions and challenges local authorities face on how much they can borrow and invest in homes, hampering their ability to invest in new homes and replace homes sold off under the Right to Buy - and the need for reforms to address this. For example, government rules do not allow the use of Right to Buy receipts to be combined with any other grant money – making it difficult for councils to replace homes sold under the policy.” Councils should therefore be allowed to retain 100% Right to Buy sale receipts to enable them to use the funds to invest in new social rented homes. See background information [here](#) and [here](#):**
- 2. UNISON supports calls for the Government to restore direct investment in public housing to enable councils to build more genuinely affordable homes at below market rates. To achieve this the Government will need to provide councils with adequate grant funding (public subsidy), more financial freedoms and powers to secure land and invest in ‘a new generation of council house building’. This will require a review of council housing finance and for the council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing caps to be abolished and replaced with a new HRA settlement which enables councils to access the finances required for them to build more homes.**
- 3. The section could also be strengthened to reflect the fact that while new measures announced in the 2017 Budget to partially lift borrowing restrictions imposed on some councils in “high demand areas” will allow some councils to contribute directly to new housing developments, they will fail to deliver the new truly affordable social rent homes at the pace and scale needed, unless councils are given more financial freedoms to enable new homes to be built.**

Section on Private Rented Sector (pages 14-17)

See pages 14-17 of policy document.

Comment

- 1. High rental costs are a significant issue for pensioners. The policy document could be strengthened to highlight the following facts: Currently there are 370,000 households of retirement age in the private rented sector and the projections are that this will reach 1,000,000 by 2035. Generation Rent has said that, between 2005–06 and 2015–16, the number of households privately renting in the 45–54 and 55–64 age groups increased from 403,000 to 1,114,000. The private rented sector in England is high cost and high turnover with insecure tenancies. The concern is that pension income will not be sufficient to enable older people to sustain renting in the private rented sector.**

General Comments

1. The policy document could highlight the fact that current government policy is focused on expanding homeownership with the clear ambition to reverse the decline in homeownership, in particular amongst young people – at the expense of the housing needs of other age groups. This approach has not worked, as it has led to funding cuts in the social housing sector with the lowest number of new social rented homes since records began. There is therefore an urgent need to invest in a public sector-led new house building programme to increase the supply of all types of housing – in particular homes with rents based on social rent levels provided by councils and housing associations - with a specific focus on the housing needs of older people (pensioners), the vulnerable and people on low and modest incomes.(Perhaps these points can be merged with/reflected in Point 1 under section on Recommendations.)

2. Housing strategy needed for older people - The policy document also needs to reflect the call by MPs for a national strategy for older people's housing. "The Communities and Local Government Committee says that the government needs to recognise the link between housing and health and social care, with better advice and information. Proposals from the committee include more funding for home improvement agencies, the removal of barriers that prevent people from moving and changes to planning policy to ensure a wider range of housing is available to older people. More information from here: https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/news-parliament-2017/housing-for-older-people-report-17-19/?utm_source=LGiU+Subscribers&utm_campaign=52e7bf516a-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_02_15

3. Housing policy developments to note - The following are a number of key housing developments in private renting which UNISON supports and perhaps could be reflected in the draft policy document:

- Ministers have been reluctant to develop policies around licensing or regulating private landlords, though some councils have robust licensing schemes. However, in January the government announced new measures to stamp out bad practice by private landlords in England, including over-crowding with landlords requiring a licence if they let homes that are occupied by five or more people from two or more separate households. More information here:<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rogue-landlords-put-on-notice-as-government-announces-tough-new-powers>
- The government has also announced that it is supporting a private member's bill, put forward by Labour MP Karen Buck, which will give tenants more rights to complain about conditions in the private and social rented sectors that are unfit for human habitation. The bill will ensure that landlords provide homes that are fit for human habitation. Where a landlord fails to do

so, a tenant would have the right to take legal action. More information here: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-supports-new-measures-to-improve-the-safety-of-tenants?utm_source=LGiU+Subscribers&utm_campaign=6477b6a724-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_18&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4e47157211-6477b6a724-199002997

COMP A. PENSIONS FOR OVERSEAS RESIDENTS POST-BREXIT

Through the NPC, UNISON has raised with government the need to ensure that any post-Brexit arrangements include the uprating of the state pension in European countries. We are aware that this issue is on the list of items to be finalised, and believe it is highly likely that we will see a positive outcome.

On the wider issue, the NPC has been a longstanding ally of the International Consortium of British Pensioners (ICBP) and their campaign to unfreeze the state pensions of UK pensioners living in around 150 countries across the globe. Two years ago the NPC produced a booklet on the subject; the NPC hold an annual meeting with the ICBP and continue to share information.

MOTION 8. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR COHABITEES – “DEMENTIA TAX”

The National Retired Members’ Committee continues to support the principle that unmarried partners should have the same rights as those who have chosen to marry with regards to recovering the cost of social care.

However the long term solution is a tax-funded National Care Service which will provide free at the point of delivery care to all those in need. UNISON will convey this view in any response to the Green Paper on Social Care which will now be published in the autumn.

MOTION 10. RETIRED MEMBERS “HUMAN LIBRARY” RECOGNISING EXPERIENCE AND REALISING POTENTIAL

Discussions have been held with LAOS (Learning and Organising Services) about the role retired members could have in supporting delivery of member and activists’ training.

UNISON has commissioned the WEA (an organisation that has been providing quality community education since 1903) to run parts of UNISON’s education programme and this may provide an opportunity for retired members to become involved as tutors.

MOTION 11. RETAINING MEMBERS WHEN THEY RETIRE WON’T JUST HAPPEN, IT NEEDS ORGANISING AND THAT MEANS STRATEGY AND RESOURCES

The National Retired Members’ Committee is working towards the action called for in points i. and ii.

With regard to point iii. recruitment is a standing agenda item for meetings of the National Retired Members' Committee and provides an opportunity to share recruitment initiatives undertaken within regions.

The Branch Retired Members' Secretary's handbook referred to in point iv. Has been updated and reprinted.

Finally, a number of regions have undertaken training for Branch Retired Members' Secretaries. The National Retired Members' Committee will collate any materials and information so that they can be shared with other regions.

MOTION 12. CELEBRATE THE BUS! DEFEND UNIVERSAL BENEFITS!

During the year many UNISON retired members were involved in the Backing The Bus Pass Campaign to celebrate the tenth year of the introduction of the concessionary bus pass for older people across the NPC. This involved handing out a pro-bus pass flyer at bus stations.

The campaign highlighted the following advantages of the bus pass:

45% of journeys were of benefit to the local economy (shopping, banking, eating out etc);

25% of journeys were used for carrying out voluntary work and unpaid caring;

The remaining 30% were used to stay healthy by visiting keep fit classes, local swimming baths etc and helping to reduce demand for and cost of health and care services.

It continues to be UNISON policy to defend universal benefits including the bus pass.

MOTION 13. EQUAL PENSIONS

The National Retired Members' Committee has approached the National LGBT Committee and Labour Link with regard to pursuing the aim of achieving equal surviving partners' pensions and bringing widowers' pensions and those for same-sex spouses and civil partners into line with those for widows in all respects.

MOTION 14. RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE – FAIR REPRESENTATION

Under rule Q the only aspects of fair representation which could relate to retired members are race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity.

The National Retired Members' Committee requested confirmation from RMS (UNISON's membership records) on what information is available on retired members' records with regard to being able to identify their race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity. These data fields were captured on the old join on line forms and are also on the new join on line forms but in both cases it is optional for the member as to whether they disclose this information. It is not asked for on the

paper application forms. As very few retired members actually would have joined on line the data will be very patchy.

MOTION 15. TRADES UNION CONGRESS

As previously reported, the total number of retired members is not included in UNISON's affiliation to the TUC.

The motion refers to all retired members being included in the membership figures used by UNISON for affiliating to the TUC. In fact only members who are paying subscriptions are included. As retired members pay a one-off subscription, a nominal number of retired members is included in the affiliation figures to represent those retired members who had paid their subscription during the previous year.

The NEC have no plans to increase the size of the UNISON TUC delegation.

MOTION 16. SCHEDULE B

Paragraph 2.7 of Schedule B is intended to assist members when they are unable to work which is not applicable to retired members. The NEC have no plans to amend Schedule B as called for by this motion.

COMP B. THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLANS ON OLDER PEOPLE

The National retired Members' Committee is planning to work jointly with the NPC to highlight the impact of STPs on older people. The issues contained in the motion have also been raised with UNISON's Health Service Group.

MOTION 18. OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSION

The National Retired Members' Committee have raised the issues contained in this motion with Labour Link.

The NPC continues to campaign for the establishment of Older People's Commissioners throughout the UK.

COMP C. WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE

The National Retired Members' Committee is still trying to collate the data requested by this motion.

In the meantime the following briefing on the issue of fuel poverty will be published on the UNISON website:

1. Defining fuel poverty

The definition of fuel poverty was changed by the government in 2012. Fuel poverty in England is now measured using the Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator. Under the LIHC indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if:

- they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
- were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line

The term 'fuel poverty' therefore encapsulates the combination of low income, poor energy efficiency and high fuel prices. However, there is no doubt that fuel poverty is closely related to more general indicators of poverty – and the demand for a warmer home is obviously linked to the age of the inhabitant.

Using this new definition, around 11% of all households in the UK live in fuel poverty. This amounts to around 2.4 million households and 1.4 million older people in England. In addition, almost one in three older people live in homes with inadequate heating or insulation making their homes more difficult to heat and/or keep warm. In total, this therefore accounts for around 3.5 million older people at risk or suffering from fuel poverty.

2. Causes of fuel poverty

In recent years we have witnessed a dramatic rise in energy prices and this is set to continue. Energy and gas prices are already rising more quickly than the state pension, and many older people are struggling to pay their bills. This winter, gas and electricity prices are set to rise by between 12-15%. It is worth noting that previous studies have found that for every 1% increase in energy bills, a further 40,000 older people fall into fuel poverty.

It is also well known that discounts on energy bills are often given to those paying by direct debit, but up to 1 million older people are without any kind of bank/building society account that would allow them to do that. Pre-payment meters and social tariffs can also be more expensive ways of paying energy bills, than customers realise. These subtle forms of financial exclusion and/or exploitation therefore contribute to the scale of fuel poverty.

Britain also has a significant number of homes which are energy inefficient, and in urgent need of improvement. This could help not only the fuel poor, but the economy as well with the creation of thousands of green jobs, as well as helping meet our climate change commitments.

Given these genuine concerns, the government's approach to this issue seems to be in danger of making the situation even worse. Despite tackling fuel poverty being a legal obligation for the government, little is being done about it.

In particular its actions in the following three areas are very worrying:

- The Warm Front Programme was an initiative set up in 2000 which helped 2.3 million households, including those in fuel poverty, benefit from energy efficiency improvements such as home heating and loft insulation measures. However, the funding was heavily reduced from 2010 and subsequently abandoned in 2013.
- The programme's replacement was called the Warm Home Discount. The discount is worth £140 a year off your electricity bill and is awarded automatically to pensioners on low incomes, such as those in receipt of Pension Credit. Other vulnerable people must apply to their energy company for the discount and their eligibility is entirely dependent on the individual companies and excludes many disabled older people.
- In May 2012, the government reduced the Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA) from £400 for the over 80s to £300, and from £250 for the under 80s to £200. When the allowance was originally introduced, it covered around a third of the average bill. Today, it barely covers a sixth. These levels have also been frozen since 2012, despite rising energy prices. Given the continuing scale of excess winter deaths amongst older people and the ongoing increase in fuel bills, the falling value of the winter fuel allowance will continue to force many more into fuel poverty.
- Since the Theresa May government has been in power, little has been done to tackle fuel poverty. The Department for Energy and Climate Change was scrapped in June 2016, and merged with the Business Department. Subsequently, no policy has been announced by the government to seriously tackle fuel poverty. Whilst they are in the process of passing an Energy Price Cap bill, which will help two-thirds of households, it is only a temporary measure that will last for just two winters. In addition, the cap fails to help those most vulnerable people in society such as those on pre-paid meters.

The real problem is the lack of an active policy to tackle fuel poverty whilst we are facing ever increasing energy costs. For example, in 2016, the average dual fuel bill reached an eye watering £1,135. Compared to in 2004 when an average home paid £565. This absorbs nearly 14% of the income of a single pensioner dependent on the Pension Credit guarantee.

3. Excess winter deaths

Every year, the Office for National Statistics provides data on the number of excess winter deaths. These are calculated as winter deaths (deaths occurring in December to March) minus the average of non-winter deaths (April to July of the current year and August to November of the previous year).

In the winter period (December to March) of 2016/17 there were an estimated 34,300 more deaths in England and Wales, compared with the average for the non-winter period. The overall figure represents a 39.5% increase on the previous year's figure and is the second highest in the last five years. It represents a death rate of 285 people a day during the 4-month period in question, or 11 deaths an hour. Not only is the public shocked by such evidence, but they are angry that the government seems incapable of tackling the issue. Reducing the scale of excess winter deaths must therefore be a priority.

4. Next steps

There can be little doubt as to the negative consequences of fuel poverty on people's health, stress and general well-being – yet failing to tackle it often creates larger unrecognised costs on health and other public services at a later date. Possible actions could involve the following:

- Introduce a national programme to improve the heating and insulation standards of existing homes so that they reach the standards of new homes built today. In particular, the homes of all low income and fuel poor households should be improved to the standard by 2020.
- Legislate to oblige all fuel companies to provide an industry-wide 'social tariff' to low income and fuel poor consumers – that offers a better deal than tariffs offered to more financially secure consumers.
- Ensure that energy companies are obliged to offer payment packages to offline customers that are equal to those available online.
- Many older people assume their loyalty for sticking with their energy provider is rewarded, when in reality those that do not switch are punished for inactivity with higher prices. Competition and choice have clearly failed the poorest customers and it is now time to introduce a real price cap on energy bills that benefits all customers, especially the poorest.
- End the use of pre-payment meters.
- Provide an annual fuel allowance to all vulnerable, older and low income households set initially at £500 which keeps pace with annual increases in average energy bills.

COMP D. HANDS OFF UNIVERSAL BENEFITS

UNISON policy continues to be to maintain non-means tested universal benefits. The NPC have indicated that they would be happy to work jointly with UNISON on any campaigning around the retention and improvement of universal benefits.

MOTION 22. UNISON'S LINKS TO THE CGT UNION

Action points 1., 2. And 3. Rely initially on information to be provided by the South East region on the development of the project. Therefore the South east region have been asked for an update on the project. With further regard to action point 1., it should be noted that some regions due to their geographical location may wish to develop links with European countries other than France.

The issue of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons has been referred to UNISON International Committee.

MOTION 23. FUNERAL POVERTY

The National Retired Members' Committee have been working with UNISON's welfare charity "There For You" on the issues raised by this motion particularly with regard to organising simple affordable funerals.

The National Retired Members' Committee also aims to promote the services provided by UNISON's charity partner Down To Earth.

MOTION 24. THE MISTAKEN PERCEPTION OF RICH PENSIONERS

To address the perception that pensioners are “rich” or “well off”, the National Retired Members’ Committee are producing an age audit illustrating the true picture of older people’s lives in the UK. This will cover areas such as income, health, fuel poverty and winter mortality, diet, housing, social exclusion and isolation and lifestyle.

The National Retired Members’ Committee is also seeking advice from UNISON Communications on conducting a survey of retired members on the realities of living on a pension.

MOTION 27. TRIPLE-LOCK ON STATE PENSIONS

This motion was submitted to the National Delegate Conference as motion 78. Unfortunately it was not reached and will be referred to the NEC.

MOTION 29. FERMENTING DISCORD BETWEEN YOUNG AND OLD

Some of the action called for by this motion is covered by motion 24 in terms of disseminating misinformation .

The National Retired Members’ Committee has also raised the issues contained in the motion with the National Young Members’ Forum.

MOTION 31. BUS PASSES

The issues contained in the motion have been raised with UNISON’s Transport Service Group.

The NPC have indicated that they are willing to work jointly on any campaigning around the retention and improvement of the concessionary bus pass.

EM1. RUSSIAN ROULETTE

The findings of the Care Quality Commission report will be used in any campaigning undertaken by UNISON in the future to defend good quality residential care.

MOTIONS NOT REACHED ON THE AGENDA

Reference of outstanding items is dealt with by standing order 10.1 which is based on national rule P18.1

Standing order 10.1 states:

“If at the end of the Conference, the Final Agenda has not been concluded, outstanding motions and amendments shall be referred to the National Retired Members’ Committee which shall report to members its decisions on those matters. All such motions and amendments shall be responded to at least one month before

the deadline for submission of motions and amendments to the following year's Conference."

There is not a blanket rejection of motions not reached but priority must be given to motions that have actually been debated and carried by conference. It would not be appropriate to invest union resources in actions not agreed by the membership at the expense of policies which have been agreed. Other factors taken into account include if the motion refers to outside bodies or calls for affiliation. It should be noted that where an outstanding item is referred to another part of UNISON, there is no guarantee that action will be taken for the reasons outlined earlier.

The National Retired Members' Committee considered the motions not reached on the agenda as follows:

MOTION 25 FOOT CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

As this motion calls for the NEC to undertake a major piece of work it would not be appropriate for it to be referred to the NEC without first having been carried by National Retired Members' Conference.

MOTION 26 R.O.A.R – REGENERATE OUR AILING RESORTS CAMPAIGN

The policy of the NRMC was to oppose this motion and therefore it is not a priority as outlined in the paragraph above.