

2019 Community Conference and Seminar UNISON FINAL AGENDA

Southport Theatre and Convention Centre

01 Mar 2019 03 Mar 2019

Organising and Recruitment

Recruitment & Organisation

1. Bargaining for good Mental Health policies in Community workplaces

Conference notes that our workplaces are changing, with members in the community and voluntary sector facing increased workloads due to a combination of slashed local authority funding, project based voluntary sector commissioning that does not cover overheads, and increased commercialisation and a target driven culture in housing associations.

These pressures have made the importance of ensuring good mental health in Community workplaces clear.

At least one in four of us will experience mental health problems at some time in our lives and at any one time one in six workers is experiencing a mental health problem. Although mental health problems aren't always caused by work, unrealistic targets, poor management, bullying and discrimination can exacerbate them.

The cost to UK employers in mental health related sickness absence, lost productivity and staff turnover is estimated at £26 billion. However the cost to our members' is incalculable.

Conference notes UNISON's recent branch guidance "Bargaining on Mental Health Policies" which includes a range of steps branches that organise in the community sector can take to raise the issue of mental health with the employer.

The guide outlines the legal protections for members, such as the right to reasonable adjustments for disabled workers, including those experiencing mental health problems. It recommends working with employers to comprehensively review the organisation's policies to promote mental wellbeing and support staff with mental health problems.

Conference notes that some employers are training staff to be mental health first aiders. This can be a positive step if it is part of a broader set of measures including changes to sickness absence and capability procedures, action on unrealistic workloads and the causes of workplace stress, management training on mental health and a commitment to providing reasonable adjustments.

Conference welcomes the work already undertaken by the Service Group Executive to implement the motion on mental health from Cymru/Wales to 2018 Community conference but there remains work to be done.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Publicise UNISON's "Bargaining on Mental Health Policies" guidance to UNISON branches which organise in the community sector, including encouraging branches

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to lobby employers to make a public commitment to mental health wellbeing in the workplace

2) Seek and disseminate examples of best practice in UNISON branches that organise in the community sector

3) Use this work as a recruitment tool to engage new members working in the community sector, including disabled members, to UNISON.

National Disabled Members Committee

Negotiating and Bargaining

Negotiation and Bargaining

2. Organising around Health & Safety

Conference notes with concern that across UNISON the number of accredited Health & Safety (H&S) representatives continues to decrease.

This is of particular concern to the Community Service Group where, out of a collective membership of almost 75,000 members, less than 200 across all our nations/regions are accredited Health & Safety Representatives.

Conference further notes that currently the Institute of Employment Rights (IER) are arguing for:

- a. Loosening the current linkage in the 1977 Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations (as amended) between union recognition and safety representative appointment to enable unions to represent members in workplaces where they are not recognised, effectively generalising the rights currently possessed by Equity and the Musicians' Union;
- b. The extension of the duty to consult over Health and Safety matters to those in control of businesses and undertakings in relation to all categories of workers (not just employees); and;
- c. The empowering of representatives to issue 'provisional improvement notices' and to 'stop the job' in situations of serious and imminent risk.

In addition, the IER argues Health and Safety should be encompassed within a new system of sectoral collective bargaining.

Conference believes that these recommendations, which are supported by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell MP and Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Rebecca Long Bailey MP, would improve the working lives of UNISON members within the Community sector and beyond.

Should this change to the legislative framework be enacted, it would assist UNISON to recruit Health & Safety representatives in the community sector and be of assistance to members working for charities and housing associations in workplaces that do not enjoy trade union recognition.

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All the evidence collected over the lifetime of the Community Service Group relating to our members' experience of violence at work, the effects of unsafe working practices on our mental health, lack of safeguarding of staff, poor sickness leave policies and the erosion of good Health and Safety practice clearly demonstrates the need to address these issues.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Continue to work with the National Health and Safety Committee to ensure that the issues raised by Community members are contained within their bargaining agenda.
2. Work with regions and branches to prioritise the recruitment of Health and Safety representatives within our sector.
3. Regularly disseminate information about the role and function of Health and Safety representatives to members in Community.
4. Work with UNISON Labour Link, NEC and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to promote the need for legislative change in relation to national Health and Safety law, consistent with UNISON's mission to safeguard our members at work.

Community Service Group Executive

3. Social Care Green Paper

UNISON Community Conference believes any plan to improve the dire state of social care in the UK must have the fair treatment of care workers at its core. Many carers work for third sector organisations, making this a key issue for the Community Service Group.

The government has said that the proposals in the forthcoming Green Paper will "ensure that the care and support system is sustainable in the long term". UNISON Community Conference does not believe this is possible unless care workers are treated with the respect and fairness they so deserve.

Poverty wages and exploitative working practices have scarred the social care workforce over a period of decades. Many carers have been on the receiving end of the following sharp employment practices:

- a. Not being paid for travel time between care visits
- b. Being forced to carry out impossible work rotas, including 15 minute care visits
- c. Chronically low staff levels

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- d. Unclear pay-slips which make it impossible to tell if they have been paid correctly
- e. Being paid less than the national minimum wage for overnight sleep-in shifts
- f. Being told that violence at work is “part of the job”

These are just a few examples of the employment practices that care workers have been forced to endure.

Conference notes that UNISON Community Service Group has worked closely with other service groups and UNISON Policy Officers to provide a full and comprehensive response to the LGA Green Paper on Social Care, launched in July 2018.

UNISON Community Conference commits to ensuring our union gives the strongest possible response to the forthcoming/current government’s social care green paper when it is published and to putting pressure on the government to face up to the issue of fair employment conditions in social care.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Work with the NEC policy Committee, Local Government and UNISON Policy Officers to contribute to a detailed response to the government Social Care Green Paper, which addresses the employment issues which are so important to UNISON Community members.
2. In particular, ensure that the issues of minimum wage for sleep-in shifts and violence at work are addressed in this response.
3. Work with UNISON Labour Link, NEC and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to secure the funding which is so badly needed to improve standards of social care and the conditions of UNISON Community members working within it.

Community Service Group Executive

4. Family Friendly Policies in the Community & Voluntary Sector

In the Community & Voluntary Sector which includes care provision, charities, not for profit organisations and housing associations, employers must ensure provision of family-friendly policies are in place when trying to recruit and maintain staff levels of experienced and valued staff.

The UK’s long hours working culture damages family life and parents are voting with their feet.

Flexible working, on its own, is only giving parents the ability to keep going, without improving their quality of life.

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For employers, tackling unsupportive workplace cultures is a crucial to success of family-friendly working initiatives.

Within organisations in the Community & Voluntary Sector, staff satisfaction and timely engagement means that care and support staff will maintain loyalty and ensure that their participation in improving workplace conditions and support continues. The end product in utopia would be a contented and settled staff team. Satisfaction amongst the employees is made up of a number of points that can make staff contented such as:

Work-Life Balance, Flexibility, Parental responsibilities, Care Provision, Managing work and private life.

Modern family life has now changed, gone are the days when there was only one breadwinner in the family, today family life has changed greatly from yesteryear. The makeup of families at this time has totally changed; there are a number of different concepts now including:

Single Parents, Same Sex Couples, Unmarried Couples, Parents that are living apart, Step Parents.

Add to this the ever increasing ageing population where individuals are working longer due to changes in pension arrangements and the increased reliance on grandparents to assist with the home structure of family life. Family friendly policies within the organisations are found to be falling short of the needs of today's families, there are other factors that also cause issues within the organisations that are closely connected with family friendly requirements, such as shared parental pay arrangements, maternity pay and maternity leave, there is also the question of staff that due to health and medical issues have the need to look at IVF and surrogacy, these generally are not always included in the framework of the policies.

Consider grandparental leave for example. The government aired this in 2015, and referred to data that more than half of mothers rely on grandparents for childcare when they first go back to work after maternity leave. This suggested that nearly two million grandparents had given up work, reduced their hours or taken time off work to help with childcare. These numbers suggest that many employees who are grandparents might look at the policy that gives some flexibility in this area as hugely appealing. Offering grandparental leave is also a way an employer can show that its promise to work-life balance is valid and not just insincerity.

An employer who widely advertises family friendly policies must ensure that they cater for the wide spectrum of diversity and inclusion that is evident in today's modern families. Some employers in the Community & Voluntary Sector go a little further and have transitional arrangements on the return to work; giving fathers the same rights as mothers and employers offering family-friendly benefits which may be more generous than other organisations in the same catchment area.

But there is nothing to stop a thoughtful and good employer putting solutions in place for its own organisation, which could pay dividends with its workforce.

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We call on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. Invite members working in the Community & Voluntary Sector and Housing Associations to look at their Family Friendly policies and submit inconsistencies to UNISON to create a spreadsheet of organisations not providing the best support for staff with families.
2. Develop a factsheet for members working in the Community & Voluntary Sector and Housing Associations that will provide advice and ways of improvement in workplace family friendly policies.
3. Establish a dialogue with organisations in the Community & Voluntary Sector and Housing Associations to share best practice in promoting the benefits of Family Friendly policies to organisations in order to benefit all support staff.

YMLAEN - FORWARD

5. The Effects on staff going through the Menopause

In the Community & Voluntary Sector which includes care provision, charities, not for profit organisations and housing associations, women make up nearly half of the workforce and with the increasing numbers of older workers many will be either be currently experiencing the menopause or will have worked through it.

Around eight in ten women report having noticeable symptoms as a result of the menopause with 45 % of these finding the symptoms hard to deal with.

Traditionally the menopause has been a taboo subject, rarely discussed openly even within families and between generations. Work places, even those dominated by female workers, have been slow to recognise that the menopause can have a significant impact on a woman's mental, physical and emotional health. The menopause is not recognised in many workplaces as an issue and consequently many women have felt they have to hide their symptoms and have not been able to request additional considerations or adjustments.

In 2016 the TUC surveyed almost 4000 workers on this issue. They report that response was overwhelming with almost 9/10 respondents stating that they felt the menopause had a direct effect on their working lives.

The survey also showed that very few workplaces had a policy that provided support to employees experiencing menopausal symptoms.

The menopause does not only affect those traditionally associated with it, i.e. Cis women (denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex) it also effects transmen who have either had their ovaries removed, thus causing a forced menopause, or who have retained their ovaries which results in them going through the menopause later in life.

Transwomen experience symptoms of the menopause due to the hormones they take during and after transition. Intersex and non-binary people may also experience the menopause. Just imagine how much more difficult it is to address this 'taboo'

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subject with your employer, or colleagues if you do not conform to what people think of as female.

The impact of the menopause is particularly difficult for many of our sectors members. As low paid workers people cannot afford to take time off and risk sickness absence reviews. We often work in isolated workplaces or, in the case of support workers, within people's homes. This means some of the suggestions from the TUC study, such as access to showers, flexible working and the provision of fans, cannot be utilised.

Support such as menopause policies, information and advice and recognition of the impact can be used in all workplaces and with all roles.

We call on the Community Service Group Executive to:

1. To work with the NEC and all appropriate agencies to develop a support plan which can be adapted within the community sector to support our members.
2. Develop a factsheet for members working in the Community & Voluntary Sector and Housing Associations that will provide advice and ways of improvement in the acceptance of the menopause which is a bigger issue in the sector that affects the staff.
3. Communicate with employers in the Community & Voluntary Sector and Housing Associations to share best practice in promoting the benefits of supporting staff that are experiencing issues with the menopause.

YMLAEN - FORWARD

5.1

In action 2, delete "Develop a factsheet" and replace with "Promote up to date information"

Community Service Group Executive

6. Inclusive workplace policies in the Community Sector

Conference celebrates UNISON's work over the past 25 years to promote women's equality and participation and to tackle sexism and sex discrimination at work, in our union and across society. Like other service groups, the community service group has a majority of women members and our rules and practices to encourage women's participation are vital to achieving our equality objectives. Likewise, in our negotiations, it is vital that we demand employers consider the impact of policies and practices on women workers and take active steps on equal pay and to tackle all forms of workplace discrimination. Considerations of gender and monitoring of women's progress or experiences are key to much of this.

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Conference notes however that an overemphasis on gender where gender has no relevance can have the unintended effect of reinforcing gender stereotypes, which can in turn reinforce gender job segregation and the glass ceiling and have no recognition for workers who do not identify as women or men.

There is increasing recognition that some workers do not identify as having a binary gender – as being solely male or female.

Conference believes that workers should be able to attend work according to their gender identity, whether this is female, male or non-binary. This may mean small but important changes to systems and facilities so that they are inclusive, such as:

- 1) Inclusive gender and title options in electronic records;
- 2) Removal of gendered language (such as he/she, sir/madam, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers) in policies and communications;
- 3) Non-gendered dress codes;
- 4) Gender neutral changing or toilet facilities.

Community establishments and workplaces that have introduced gender neutral private cubicles with open washing spaces have found that they increase users' sense of safety and reduce graffiti. Sometimes this option can be introduced easily by designating some facilities as gender neutral. In other buildings, it will need a redesign, to ensure facilities that are safe and accessible and provide greater privacy, such as individual lockable cubicles rather than open plan communal changing rooms.

By becoming more inclusive for our members we also become more inclusive to the people we work with. It is to this end, that the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Committee consulted with its members who overwhelmingly supported a name change for the group to be called LGBT plus (+) although the remit of the group will remain the same, LGBT+ was felt to be a more inclusive term.

Conference calls on the community service group executive to:

- A) Gather good practice examples from branches organising in the community sector of inclusive policies and practices, including in record-keeping, language, any dress codes and in the provision of safe and accessible gender-neutral facilities;
- B) Promote good practice across the service group.
- C) Promote the Gender equality: non-binary inclusion fact sheet to community branches
- D) Circulate the national LGBT committee's briefing on becoming LGBT+, LGBT bargaining factsheets and how to be a good trans ally leaflet to branches organising in the community sector and encourage support amongst community members for any rule change to national delegate conference on the LGBT group becoming LGBT+

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National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

7. Building and Strengthening Black Community links

Conference notes the national Black members' committee 'Creating, Building, and Strengthening Black Community link motion was debated with much support from other delegates at the 2018 Community conference and was carried along with the amendment submitted by the Community Service Group Executive.

However the National Black Member's Committee is concerned that limited work has commenced and therefore is seeking to further address some of the fundamental issues that continue to impact on the Black community.

The damaging decline in numbers and workplace density is as a result of many housing associations merging. This has resulted in more job losses disproportionately in a community where there is a high concentration of Black workers. This has reduced our effectiveness in the workplace, our impact in collective bargaining negotiations and most importantly member engagement.

However, despite the job losses in our communities, UNISON is to be applauded on successfully maintaining its membership figures and Black members are still said to be 'most likely to join a union'.

Nevertheless, for Black members, the issue of racism and discrimination still prevails and conference notes a continued trend of research that reflects some of the barriers Black member face by lack of engagement and representation across the public/private sectors in our regions and branches.

Encouragingly, the recent general election campaign, showed overwhelming support of Jeremy Corbyn and a more socialist leadership for the country demonstrating an eagerness of members to become involved in the democratic process, campaigning and participation in the decision making which affects their lives.

Throughout the year our NEC General political fund supports branch regional and national initiatives that encourage and involve our members in the community and in their wider communities via a vast range of diverse equality events.

These numerous events have helped increase membership, interest in the union and positive feedback as to UNISON's visibility. The events provide an opportunity to discover exactly what the union is doing for members, and how we as a union can be responsive to the real issues which concern them.

With deeply concerning issues for Black members which have never been more increasingly important since the Brexit decision was taken. According to Home Office figures, of the 386,474 stops and searches made last year 58,397 were of people who self-identified as being Black or Black British. This is the equivalent of 31.4 stop and searches for every 1,000 Black people in the UK compared to white people for whom there were only 4.9 stop and searches for every 1,000 people. With evidence of racial bias in the criminal justice system, Black men are seven times more likely to be affected by 'stop and search', Deaths in police custody, the rise in racism and attacks specifically affecting women and children and elderly in our Black communities.

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Following the Manchester bombing where figures for reported Race Hate crimes rose by 500%; the tragic deaths at Finsbury Mosque and acid attacks of young Asian people, African Caribbean men in the mental health system where unnecessary punitive force is applied such as tasers and the completely avoidable deaths at Grenfell Tower have served only to highlight the overall feeling of distrust and neglect felt by many in the Black community who insist that “Black Lives do Matter”.

We must continue to connect with and support our members affected by such events by building sustainable community engagement. By being more visible to our members and offering support which allows them to see the wider benefits of trade union involvement.

Conference therefore calls upon the Community Service Group Executive to work with the National Black Members Committee:

1. Where possible, to engage in specific work to connect with local Black community groups who do work in support of our members in their communities;
2. To seek to explore and undertake statistical survey of racism within the work place for further action and support in the housing and community sector.
3. And with Labour link and NEC in recognising the significance in retaining and supporting membership and self organisation groups in the community sector.

National Black Members' Committee

7.1

In paragraph 2 delete “is concerned that limited work has commenced and therefore”.

Add at end of Para 2, after “Black Community.”, add “Nonetheless, Conference notes the work done to deliver on the 2018 motion, which includes successful engagement between the Community SGE and Black Community Groups. The progress of this successful work has been monitored by the Service Group Executive throughout the past year and a full report on this work is available in the 2019 Annual Report to this Conference.”

In para 3, delete “The damaging decline” and replace with “A decline”

In para 3, after “workplace density”, delete “is” and replace with “could be”

In para 3, change “This has resulted in more job losses” to “This may have resulted in more job losses”

In paragraph 3, delete “This has reduced our effectiveness” and replace with “There is a danger this could reduce our effectiveness”

At the end of para 3, add “This is particularly urgent given the well-documented disproportionate impact of public spending cuts on Black community groups and organisations.”

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In paragraph 9, which begins “With deeply concerning”, delete “of the 386,474 stops and searches made last year” and replace with “of the 386,474 stops and searches made in 2015-16”

In paragraph 10, which begins “Following the Manchester Bombing”, delete “by many in the Black community” and replace with “across all Black communities”.

In action point 3, after “And with Labour Link and NEC” insert “ and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland”

At the end, as a new paragraph insert : “4. Work with Regions and Branches with members in the Community Service Group to promote the UNISON Race Discrimination Protocol as an equalising tool that can provide a more transparent, effective and accountable way of dealing with race discrimination in our workplaces.”

Community Service Group Executive

Campaigning

Campaigns

8. Women’s Refuges and Universal Credit Changes

Conference congratulates campaigners, including UNISON’s National Women’s Self-Organised Group, on their success in preventing changes to the welfare system which would have caused the closure of more women’s refuges. Proposed government changes resulting from Universal Credit could have meant women fleeing abusive partners not being able to pay for accommodation using housing benefit. This is the last guaranteed source of income available to many refuges.

In August 2018, pressure applied by the campaign, led by Women’s Aid, forced the government into a u-turn when they announced that all supported housing funding would be retained in the welfare system.

However, the episode shows once again that refuges remain vulnerable to closure as a result of continued austerity measures. The UK has a network of more than a thousand refuges providing women and children with sanctuary from violence and giving ongoing support. Refuge services for survivors of domestic violence have been decimated by the public-sector funding cuts.

Data provided by 131 refuges in 2016 showed that, on one day, 78 women along with their children were turned away because they could not be accommodated. This is unacceptable.

Conference believes it is absolutely crucial that the Government should provide more funding for refuge places.

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Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with UNISON Labour Link and other stakeholders to improve the financial position of women's refuges. This includes lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 2) Work with UNISON Women's Self-Organised Group to support their campaigning on this issue.
- 3) Ensure UNISON Community members working in the women's refuge sector are aware of this campaigning work and have an opportunity to get more involved.

Community Service Group Executive

9. Standing Up for Fair Pay for CVS Workers in Commissioned Services

Community conference welcomes the recent nationally negotiated pay deals for Local Government and the NHS giving many public service workers deserved pay rises. However, many members in the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) work for employers who are held in long-term contracts with the public sector, with no annual or inflationary uplifts built into those contracts. Employers are then either unable or unwilling to give pay rises whilst inflation reduces the real value of those contracts.

Consequently, many CVS staff nationally have received little or no cost-of-living pay rises in the last nine years. As a result, many members in the CVS are struggling financially and real income is falling relative to their Local Government and NHS comrades. Conference believes that this unfair situation needs to be remedied.

This conference, therefore, resolves to call upon the Community Service Group Executive to:-

- 1) Lobby UNISON Labour Link, the NEC and other stakeholders, political parties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, including politicians responsible for Local Government and NHS, for extra funding for contracts to have annual uplifts.
- 2) Instigate a campaign along the lines of the Pay Up Now campaign but that includes the needs of CVS employees who work for employers that are commissioned by the public sector.
- 3) Liaise with UNISON's national Local Government and NHS Pay Negotiators and Service Groups around this issue to ensure our CVS members are not forgotten.
- 4) Call upon the regions to analyse the situation for CVS employees who work for organisations that are commissioned by the Public Sector.

Bristol

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9.1

In paragraph 1, replace “Employers are then” with “Some employers are then”

In action 2) delete “Instigate a campaign along the lines of” and replace with “Continue to work with the NEC and”. In the same action, after “Pay Up Now campaign”, delete “but that” and replace with “to ensure it”.

Community Service Group Executive

10. Alexa, Did you take our Jobs? The Rising Threat of Automation and Computerisation in the Housing Sector

Conference notes the rising number of business reports and academic research regarding automation and computerisation across the whole economy over the last five years. From Frey & Osborne’s alarmist 2013 “The Future of Employment”, claiming 47% of jobs in the USA were at risk of automation to Ford’s seminal “the Rise of The Robots” in 2015. There is growing concern that there is an increasing appetite amongst Housing Associations to invest in such software products at a rate not seen in many years. Driven by threats to business income over rent arrears from Universal Credit and Bedroom Tax, to rent cuts and freezes etc. There is also aggressive marketing by software providers.

Capita even title their sales staff as “Product Evangelists”. But it is not just the established players like Capita eyeing up the Housing Association market, recently the likes of Hitachi have been investing and marketing solutions for Associations. New companies like Mobyssoft are also actively marketing products such as “Rent Sense”. Many associations are moving towards tenant’s web portals, so they don’t need to engage with staff at all. It is all part of a growing trend that a sector, that was always seen as a “people business”, is increasingly becoming simply a business, losing its soul and purpose. This is a concern for many members in itself, with many long serving members leaving the profession, and possibly the union. More worrying still is the growing threat to jobs from developing technology such as Artificial Intelligence.

The 2018 PWC report “Will Robots Really Steal Our Jobs” in particular makes for scary reading, suggesting possible job losses across sectors and that it will happen in 3 phases. The first phase, the algorithmic wave has already begun. With products like the aforementioned Rent Sense’s algorithms actively being marketed as providing an immediate 32% full time equivalent staff efficiency.

The Second Phase is the Augmentation Wave, and the third the Autonomous Wave could start around the year 2030. The report predicts that by this time around 35% of “public administration” jobs could be at risk. It even predicts that 20% of “human health and social work” jobs could be at risk with further breakdowns and risks to workers by age, gender and educational attainment.

It is clear that the threat to members’ jobs from automation and computerisation is back on the agenda, at a level not seen for many years. Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

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- 1) Carry out a questionnaire of members in the housing sector to gather evidence of new software and practices that pose a risk to jobs and canvas their experiences and concerns.
- 2) Carry out research on companies and products developing automation and efficiency solutions.
- 3) Develop a strategy to assess and mitigate the risks to member's jobs from automation and computerisation.

Cymru/Wales Region

10.1

Insert new first paragraph: "Conference notes that we are living through a period of profound and rapid technological change which has the potential to significantly affect our working lives."

In new 2nd paragraph after "Conference" insert "further"

In new paragraph 6, which begins "It is clear . . .", after first sentence insert: "Conference agrees with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) that the key aim for managing this wave of technology must therefore be to protect workforces and communities who are at greatest risk of seeing their jobs change."

Delete action point 2) and replace with new action point: "2) Contribute to UNISON's due diligence on employers, organisations and product developments which seek to transform our working lives."

Delete Action point 3) and insert new "3) Continue to work with the NEC, Labour Link and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in recognising the significant impact that automation and computerisation has on our working lives."

Community Service Group Executive

11. Hidden Disabilities

In the Community & Voluntary Sector which includes care provision, charities, not for profit organisations and housing associations - long term health conditions which incorporate hidden disabilities is a subject that comes up regularly in the workplace. Community Sector staff who are not aware that they meet the definition of Disability in the Equality Act 2010 (as amended) fail to realise that the Act can be used to protect them against unfair practices and poor treatment of health issues that come under the banner of disability, visible or hidden.

We are all aware of the person in a wheelchair that is the recognised symbol of disability everywhere, from supermarket car parks to public transport to workplaces. People believe that "real" disability can be seen and that anyone who is not visibly

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impaired is not really disabled. Time and again the words “you don’t look disabled” are used to show disbelief.

What about those members who have a hidden disability and go about their lives without telling their colleagues or employers? Some of these might be low paid workers who care about the individuals they support and may attempt to conceal the effects of an impairment in order to “fit in” or to simply maintain employment. Without a higher number of union members identifying as disabled, the ability to start and run strong campaigns that challenge disability discrimination becomes limited. This includes the ability to organise in workplaces and improve rights for disabled people.

The “hidden” part of invisible disabilities means there is some urgency for creating awareness and changing attitudes. Changes often start with simple conversations that encourage understanding. Removing the social stigma involved with revealing an invisible disability and having colleagues, employers and others try to be more accommodating and accepting of the unique challenges faced can also help create a more inclusive society.

This conference calls upon the Community Service Group Executive to:-

1. Work closely with the National Disabled Members Committee to gather information and advice on hidden disability.
2. Provide guidance to branches with Community members and reps on how to negotiate for the rights of members with hidden disabilities to ensure members are treated fairly by their employers.
3. Advertise to branches with Community members and reps ‘Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments - A Guide to evidence under the Equality Act 2010’ newly published guidance by Unison as a helpful source of information.
4. Provide a specific guide for reps to use with employers within the Community Sector to explain the term ‘hidden disabilities’.
5. Arrange for articles to be included within UNISON Community publications sent out to members and activists about hidden disabilities and what they are, to enable members to self-identify as having a disability.

Cymru/Wales Region

Efficient and Effective Union

Efficient and Effective Union

12. Mental Health support for our members

One in four people in the UK will have a mental health problem at some point. While mental health problems are common, most are mild, tend to be short-term and are normally successfully treated.

Mental health is about how we think, feel and behave. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health problems. They are often a reaction to a difficult life

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event, such as bereavement, but are increasingly being caused by work-related issues.

Although many employers operate employment assistance programmes the service provided can vary widely. Most assessments are carried out over the telephone and the counselling that follows is also phone based and limited to a certain number of sessions.

The current work to train mental health first aiders in the workplace includes valuable information on relevant signposting for people suffering from mental health problems.

Conference notes that we in the community sector are in a unique position to help our members with support both in work and if they become unemployed. A number of the employers where we have members are charities specifically set up with mental health in mind. Branches and our members are more likely to be aware of and may even work in smaller local services which can support people with their mental health whether in work or not.

Conference asks the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Survey Unison community service group members on the mental health services available in their area
- 2) Create a directory of mental health services available to members by region and publicise this to Unison branches.

West Midlands Community Branch

12.1

In the first sentence, delete “in the UK will have a mental health problem” and replace with “in the UK will experience mental ill-health”

In action point 2, delete “Create” and replace with “Publicise to UNISON Community members” and delete “and publicise this to Unison branches”

Community Service Group Executive

13. Housing Association Mergers

We continue to see a number of housing associations merge across regions and nationally. These range from large scale mergers such as the creation of Clarion Housing Group (125,000 homes) to the medium/smaller scale such as WM Housing (30,000 homes).

These mergers present a range of challenges to us in the community sector, such as retaining membership and keeping members informed and updated across, potentially many different branches. They also however present opportunities, with the potential exposure to new members and workplaces that may not have had previous recognition or any Unison presence at all.

2019 Community Conference and Seminar UNISON FINAL AGENDA

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

1. Compose a report on membership and trends in merged housing associations pre and post-merger.
2. Produce a guide for regions on mergers in housing associations.
3. Create an organising strategy specifically for merging and merged housing associations

West Midlands Community Branch

14. Making Community workplaces safe and accessible

Conference notes that the legal framework that is supposed to ensure reasonable access for disabled workers comprises the Equality Act 2010 and building regulations. The Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1993 also give workers the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

However despite this legal underpinning, conference is aware that some disabled workers in Community workplaces continue to be denied reasonable adjustments and work in inaccessible and unsafe buildings.

Some employers refuse to make adjustments to neighbourhood offices or “hubs”. In addition, Community members often work in service users homes and these can be inaccessible and unsafe for disabled members in particular. Domestic premises are not always covered by the 1993 Health and Safety regulations, however the Equality Act can be used to push these employers to make reasonable adjustments to remove any barriers employees face in their job and duties.

Conference notes UNISON’s updated 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' guide which can be used by branches which organise in the community sector to negotiate reasonable adjustments for their disabled members. Conference further notes UNISON’s suite of health and safety guides which are a vital tool in making our Community workplaces safer for all our members.

Conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Circulate the 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' guide to branches and encourage them to negotiate for reasonable adjustments to workplaces.
- 2) Circulate UNISON’s 'Health and Safety Six Pack' guide to branches.
- 3) Consider producing a briefing on how branches can use these resources to negotiate safe and accessible workplaces, including where the workplace is in the community or is a service user’s home.

National Disabled Members Committee