

Breaking down barriers

National Disabled Members'

Annual report 2019

Disabled Members Annual Report 2019

Breaking Down Barriers

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1. Chairs' introduction

It's been another productive year for our National Disabled Members Self Organised Group and we have been honoured and humbled to be your chairs.

UNISON was this year again confirmed as the UK's biggest trade union. We want to ensure it's also known for being the number one union for disabled workers. We estimate we have at least 160,000 and possibly up to 200,000 disabled members in the union, and we want to grow this even further.

At this year's National Delegate Conference it was agreed that UNISON will make 2021 the Year of Disabled Workers. This is a great opportunity for us to highlight the work of our self organised group, to have a stronger voice with the union and – crucially – to recruit more disabled members to our group.

We also want to raise our profile across the country and this year we have attended community events, taking every opportunity to recruit. Our North West region again ran a very successful recruitment stall at the Disability Awareness Day event in Warrington, the biggest disability event in the UK.

We have worked to be that strong voice of those up to 200,000 disabled members, at equality liaison meetings, network days, at TUC Disabled Workers Committee and TUC Disabled Members conference. We've sent representatives to National Delegate Conference and to the service groups and to all of the self organised group conferences. We have also lobbied parliamentarians on disability benefit issues. Wherever we've gone we've made sure we represented that voice of tens of thousands of UNISON disabled members loud and clear.

Our disabled members come from every part of the public services. From support staff, ancillary workers, refuse collectors, nurses, police civilian staff, home care workers, cooks, accountants, the list goes on. We all play a vital part in this union. We were very proud when our own Sian Stockham was re-elected as UNISON vice president this year. She has helped to raise awareness of our self organised group in the wider union.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all involved in our self organised group, including our national committee members, NEC reps, speech to text team, our British Sign Language interpreters, our national officers and the technical teams and all the regional committees and branch disabled members officers across the country who have worked so hard to put policy into practice in their local

areas. We're looking forward to another great year to come as we continue to be the number one union for disabled workers!

Graeme Ellis and Cath McGuinness (Co-Chairs)
Carl Phillips and Kim Silver (Deputy Co-Chairs)

Breaking down barriers

This year the National Disabled Members Committee significantly ramped up its campaigning, recruitment and negotiating work. With support from the Campaign Fund, we designed and delivered a survey of our members to identify the issues they face in the workplace. We want to use the results of this survey to show potential members and current members the high priority UNISON places on representing our disabled members.

Reasonable adjustments continue to be the biggest challenge our members face in the workplace. This is why we have produced a new bargaining guide for use by local branches. But we also want to use our survey results to campaign for changes in the law. Too often employers refuse to agree adjustments or just ignore requests. Enforcement of the Equality Act simply isn't strong enough and we have been lobbying politicians for strengthening protections.

We have continued to champion the social model of disability within UNISON, producing resources and making it core to everything we do. Our disability leave bargaining guide is now well used by branches and a number of employers have adopted our model policy.

We have continued to campaign against "welfare reform", publicising our PIP survey results and pushing for changes to Universal Credit that would put disabled people at the heart of decision making and take a person-centred and holistic approach to supporting independence.

Our Labour Link group has met at every national committee meeting and has coordinated our lobbying work.

Recruitment has been another focus this year and we have built up materials for branches to use in marking Disability History Month locally. New recruitment leaflets focused on disabled workers should help us to achieve our aim to be acknowledged as **the** union for disabled workers.

Our caucus groups continue to develop and they have been a strong intersectional voice for under-represented members in our group. We have also again run a national training day for branch disabled members officers, building up a network of trained activists across UNISON.

With the national union now agreeing to highlight disability history month and to make 2021 the Year of Disabled Workers we look forward to developing our profile within the union and in the workplace even further.

2. National Disabled Members Committee Work Programme

The National Disabled Members committee develop their annual work programme based on the motions agreed at conference. At 2018 Disabled Members Conference 28 motions were passed.

At the committee Policy Weekend in January we divided the motions and assigned them to two sub groups. This year's sub groups were the Disability Policy and campaigns group and the Representing and Organising Disabled Workers group. The co-chairs group convened the sub-groups. The groups met at each of the four national committee meetings during the year and progressed the more detailed work on the motion action points.

This year the sub groups took a different approach to previous years and rather than try to discuss all motions at every meeting they decided to focus on key areas at each meeting. This worked well for the representing and organising group which had some clear deliverables that could be focused on but perhaps worked less well for the policy group when changes in the law take longer than a year to achieve! The committee will consider any changes for next year in its October meeting.

Disability Policy and Campaigns

Motions 6, 9, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, EM1, 34 (not reached), 35 (not reached), 36 (not reached) and 37 (not reached)

Welfare Reform

There were three motions on welfare benefits on last year's conference agenda, although not all were reached. Fighting the Tories' welfare "reforms" has continued to be a key campaign for NDMC and a core part of this year's work plan.

We attended the regular roundtables convened by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Margaret Greenwood to work on Labour's position on work capability assessments (WCA). These meetings have helped develop the Labour Party's thinking and led to a successful lobby of parliament in February which UNISON supported and attended. Along with disabled people's organisations and Disability Labour we called for an end to unfair assessments. Graeme Ellis, one of our co-chairs spoke on behalf of UNISON disabled members at the event, which was also attended by John McDonnell.

We responded to the Labour party's policy consultation 'Rebuilding a Just Social Security System'. We called for a replacement for the harsh and

punitive sanctions regime which leaves our low paid members in financial hardship. We made clear that Labour needs to develop a person centred and holistic approach to welfare benefits that supports disabled people's independence and takes account of labour market disadvantage. We have started a programme of regular meetings with Margaret Greenwood so that we can have a more direct impact on Labour Party policy when it comes to welfare benefits and access to work.



Our co-chair Graeme Ellis with Marsha deCordova MP at the lobby of parliament

We continued to publicise our report on PIP “Punished for going to Work” and used this as a basis for campaigning and lobbying. Working with our Scottish Regional Disabled Members Committee, we welcomed the Scottish government’s proposed replacement for PIP, “Disability Assistance”, and in particular the plan to end privatisation of assessments in Scotland. However our Scottish region asked the Scottish government to do more to ensure that the new system did not continue to penalise disabled people in work in the way the PIP system does.

We submitted a motion to UNISON's national delegate conference on making benefit application procedures more accessible for disabled people. This was agreed by conference and has now become part of the NEC's work programme. We also ensured that sources of support for members applying for welfare benefits were included in our new Stewards Guide to Representing Disabled Members.

Disability Pay Gap

We submitted a motion to the TUC Disabled Workers Conference in May calling for tougher action on tackling the disability pay gap which stands at 15%. This motion was passed unanimously and is now part of the work programme of the TUC Disabled Workers Committee.

In June we responded to the Labour Party's consultation on monitoring pay gaps, calling for a statutory duty on employers to publish their disability pay gaps and to consult trade unions on planned actions.

Our reps from the National Women's Committee gave a presentation to NDMC in August on the gender pay gap and we considered issues of intersectionality and how women disabled workers face a double whammy when it comes to pay discrimination. We publicised UNISON's new guide to the gender pay gap via our eBulletin and encouraged regional disabled members groups to raise this in their regions and branches.

In early September, with talk of a snap election in the air, we responded to the Labour Party's request for manifesto suggestions by reiterating the need to tackle the pay gap. We again called for mandatory publication of the disability pay gap and for a statutory requirement for employers to also publish robust action plans to reduce the gap. We were delighted when Jeremy Corbyn committee dot taking action on the disability pay gap in his Labour Party conference speech in late September.

Mental Health campaigning

We worked with the other self organised groups to run a fringe event at National Delegate Conference on mental health inequalities. We were delighted to welcome both Touchtone, the BAME mental health organisation, and the Shaw Trust to speak on the issue. The event was well attended and delegates raised a number of important issues from the floor.

We submitted motions to service group conferences, including Energy and Community, highlighting the importance of making employers responsible for mental health first aid in the workplace in the same way as they are responsible for physical first aid. We are campaigning for new legislation in this area which would make clear the employer's obligations.

Access to Democracy

At last year's conference we ran a workshop on standing for election as a Labour candidate. This session was run by the Local Government Association Labour Group. We were delighted when a number of our disabled members stood in the local elections in May and we look forward to building on this in future elections.

We have continued to call for the reinstatement of the Access to Elected Office fund on a permanent basis. We raised the need for the extension of Access to Work support so that it can support a member both in their job and in their elected role, at the same time, when we met with Margaret Greenwood, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.



Some of those who attended our successful branch disabled Members Officers training day in September

We responded in detail to the Labour Party's democracy review, focusing on the need to maintain the trade union link and to ensure full participation of disabled members in party structures and democracy. We called for a central fund to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled Labour Party members to increase participation. We were delighted when NDMC member Katrina Murray was elected as the disabled members representative on Labour's Conference Arrangements Committee which oversees access issues. UNISON is affiliated to Disability Labour and we have also had a meeting of NDMC Labour Link members at each of our national committee meetings. We submitted a motion on access to democracy to this year's national Labour Link Forum which was passed and is now part of the Labour Link's work programme.

Disability Hate Crime and Mate Crime

We were represented at the Equality and Diversity Forum's 'Hate crime: The case for legal reform' seminar in November. The Law Commission have been asked by the government to undertake a review of hate crime legislation and UNISON has registered as a stakeholder. We intend to respond to the Law Commission's consultation once it has commenced and will continue to make the point that we need a new definition of disability hate crime that closes the current loopholes where some perpetrators get off scot free or with lesser sentences.

We met with UNISON's Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) who have agreed to review the hate crime training course which is available for regions to run and to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.

We included details of how to report disability hate crime and mate crime in our new Stewards Guide to Representing Disabled Members. We also publicised UNISON's guide, 'Tackling Hate Crime and Hate Incidents: A Workplace Issue' using the eBulletin.

Exiting the EU and the UNDRCP

UNISON held a well attended roundtable on Brexit and disabled people's human rights in September, just as parliament was prorogued. The Shadow Minister for Brexit, Paul Bloemfield, was one of the speakers at the event, along with speakers from Disability Rights UK, the Shaw Trust, Inclusion Scotland, Wales Civil Society Forum on Brexit, Cloisters Law and the Legal Education Foundation. UNISON was represented by one of the NDMC co-chairs, Graeme Ellis who stressed the importance of campaigning for the UNCRPD to be incorporated into UK law to give disabled people more protection post-Brexit. Subsequent to the meeting we circulated a briefing to MPs and peers calling on them to write to the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson asking him to advocate for legislation incorporating the UNCRPD within the upcoming Queen's Speech.

Safe Interpreting services for Deaf people accessing public services and a BSL Act

We included information on booking BSL interpreters in our Stewards Guide to Representing Deaf (BSL) members and we particularly emphasised the need to ensure only fully qualified interpreters are used by employers and by the union.

In our response to the Labour Party manifesto consultation we called for a BSL Act and full legal recognition of British Sign Language. This Scottish

government has already implemented a BSL Act and we believe this needs to be rolled out to the other UK nations.

Access to Sexual Health information for Disabled LGBT people

We worked closely with the national LGBT+ committee on a range of issues this year and in particular we have included information on signposting members to sexual health information in our new Stewards Guide to Representing Disabled Members.

Representing and Organising Disabled Workers

Motions 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 31

Disability History Month

The NDMC have been very keen to use Disability History Month in November/December as a way of highlighting UNISON's work on disability equality and encouraging new disabled members to join the union. We produced a short branch guide to running a stall for disability history month which is available on our website. As well as lots of resources you can use this also includes a recruitment "script" for having one-to-one conversations with potential members. We have publicised this through the eBulletin and want all branches to consider holding an event or running a stall for Disability History Month.

We were very grateful to the South West region who submitted a motion to National Delegate Conference committing UNISON nationally to celebrating Disability History Month annually and using this as a way of recruiting more disabled members to UNISON. This has now become part of the NEC's work programme. We were proud to sponsor this year's national Disability History Month newsletter which included the UNISON logo for the first time.



AGS Christina McAnea gives evidence to the parliamentary select committee on reasonable adjustments

Reasonable Adjustments

Fighting for reasonable adjustments in the workplace has always been a priority for us. This year we decided to ask our members themselves about their experiences of requesting reasonable adjustments. We launched our Workplace Disability and Health Survey on 1 September and were delighted when hundreds of our members completed it within days. We asked members how long they had to wait for reasonable adjustments and whether there were adjustments they had been turned down for. Once the

results have been collated we will produce a report on the findings. We expect to use this as a basis for lobbying government to strengthen enforcement of the right to reasonable adjustments.

This year we also produced a new Reasonable Adjustments Bargaining Guide. This includes a model policy branches can negotiate with their employers and a model 'Passport'. We publicised this using our eBulletin. and we used the service groups to circulate it directly to branches

We also responded to the parliamentary Women and Equalities select committee inquiry not the Equality Act. We outlined the need to strengthen enforcement of reasonable adjustments, including a timetable for implementation. We were pleased to be invited to give oral evidence to the Committee in November. Assistant General Secretary Christina McAnea represented us and spoke on behalf of our disabled members. She was questioned by MPs and was clear in highlighting the need for better enforcement. UNISON's points were included in the final report from the committee.

Disability leave

As part of our Workplace Disability and Health Survey we also asked members about their experience of applying for disability leave. We will use the results of the survey to push for more branches to get their employers to sign up to disability leave policies.

We continue to promote our Disability Leave Bargaining Guide which also includes a model policy. This has been circulated through the eBulletin. We also submitted motions on disability leave to service group conferences and as a result the guide has been sent directly to branches by UNISON's service groups.

Negotiating and bargaining for disabled workers rights

We worked closely with the health service group on the design and implementation of the new Workplace Disability Equality Standard (WDES) in the NHS. The WDES is a set of ten measures which will be used to assess each NHS Trust's performance when it comes to disability equality. UNISON attended a number of meetings and events to agree the ten measures and to roll out the new process to all foundation trusts in England. We also produced our own guidance for branches, encouraging them to work with their trust on the WDES and highlighting how this could be used to improve workplace rights for their disabled members. The health service group circulated our guidance directly to all health branches. We hope that the WDES approach is eventually reflected in the health services in the devolved nations.

We also contributed to UNISON's updated Negotiating Sick Leave Policies guide, ensuring that employers don't use sickness absence procedures against disabled workers who are entitled to reasonable adjustments. In similar vein we responded to the consultation on the NICE guidance on long term sickness absence, highlighting the need for employers to implement reasonable adjustments.

Hotdesking

Hot desking was an issue raised in a motion to 2018 conference and we contributed to UNISON's new Hotdesking Bargaining Guide, ensuring the guide included information on exemptions to hot desking for disabled staff. The guide has been circulated to all branches.

We also progressed this issue through the service groups by submitting an amendment to Health conference on the issue.

Mental Health – equipping the rep

We continued to publicise our Bargaining for Mental Health Policies guide for branches. In addition to circulating the guide via our eBulletin, a number of training workshops have been delivered to service groups and regional disabled members committees, giving activists the skills to raise mental health with the employer and to identify the policies they want to see adopted or changed.

Neurodiversity

We responded to the government consultation on a new Autism Strategy for England. We made the point that the adjustments required by neurodiverse people often relate to policies and procedures rather than bricks and mortar. Ironically this might cost next to nothing but can often be more difficult to get employers to agree to as it does not fit with their idea of a reasonable adjustment. We therefore called for stronger enforcement of the Equality Act, not least because going to tribunal can present neurodiverse workers with particular challenges.

Disability Employment Gap

In November the government published a 'Voluntary Reporting on Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework' which encourages employers to report on the percentage of disabled employees in their organisation and work they are undertaking to recruit and retain disabled people. UNISON submitted a motion to the TUC Disabled Workers Conference criticising the framework as it is only voluntary, and instead calling for statutory reporting and a programme of action to address the issue. This was agreed and now forms part of the TUC Disabled Workers Committee work programme. NDMC will continue to raise the need for mandatory reporting in its campaigning work.

An Ageing Population and workforce

A motion on this subject at 2018 conference called on the NDMC to undertake a survey of members and this became our Workplace Disability and Health survey.

We also contributed to UNISON's updated Carers Leave Bargaining Guide, ensuring that it was inclusive of disabled workers.

The future of care is a huge concern for our members. UNISON has established a cross cutting social care project to look at how we take a leading role in this debate. Our local government, community and health service groups are all involved, in addition to our private contractors unit, and the views of disabled members are also being sought.



University of the West of England branch at their successful Disability History Month event

Recruiting and retaining deaf workers

This year we produced a new guide to representing Deaf members for branch stewards. The guide outlines how to book interpreters, how best to set up a meeting with a Deaf member so that communication goes smoothly and there are no barriers for the member, and suggestions on how to better represent Deaf members' when they are facing problems at work. The guide will be available at conference and it will also be circulated to branches and regions.

An intersectional approach

The NDMC is committed to taking an intersectional approach to equality issues. This year we strongly supported the National LGBT+ Committee in their successful efforts to change their name to LGBT+. The NDMC undertook training on intersectionality and “micro-agressions” at the April meeting, particularly focusing on race. As above, the committee also considered UNISON’s gender pay gap work at its August meeting. We also commenced work on auditing our committee and conference policies and procedures to ensure we are non-binary inclusive and will continue with this process.



Sussex branch Disability History Month stall

Reasonable adjustments - reasonable for who?

We worked with other unions and the TUC Disabled Workers committee on the issue of lack of accessible public buildings. In particular we worked with the UCU trade union in relation to Higher Education workplaces. We attended an event in parliament in November which was hosted by Marsha de Cordova MP, Shadow Minister for Disabled People. UNISON’s Joanna Vanderhoof, who represents the Eastern Region on the NDMC and is from the Higher Education service group, spoke on behalf of UNISON disabled members.

3. Conference Reports

National Delegate Conference (NDC)

Well we are off, its Tuesday morning and at least 2,500 UNISON members are raring to go. President Gordon McKay in the chair means a prompt start. Gordon gave his speech and thanked all of UNISON for his year in presidency.

The first debate was Composite H 'Justice for the Windrush Generation', with passionate speakers expressing the injustice for those that came to this country on "Windrush", but sadly the first point of order is raised after only five speakers after hard work had been put into speeches, nerves conquered to get up and speak, but that's the way conference can and does go sometimes.

Onto the remaining order of business "the snake" until lunch at 12.45pm, then it was time to chair our first of two NDC Disabled Members Caucus meetings. A sandwich lunch was provided, which both gave us a guaranteed turnout, and was also very much appreciated by the members who turned up. We spoke about conference, reasonable adjustments, access, centre staff and vendors and how friendly and helpful they were. We also advertised the network days for Disabled LGBT+, women, Black members, and Native BSL Deaf members, how they worked and explained that they were paid for nationally for travel and lunch provided.

One member asked why there wasn't a room provided so that people could rest if they felt the need, such as a lie down. We did explain that they could say to branch leads/regional reps that they required time off the conference floor. There is a quiet room and prayer room provided but sorry no bed. There were issues raised about the natural light being poor and a feeling of being underground, poor signage for rooms, and acoustics, there were some suggestions of colour being used for signs, i.e. yellow background black writing to assist members with a visual impairment.

UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis gave a speech to the delegates in the afternoon when conference resumed. Dave talked about the rise of far right extremism, the risk of no-deal Brexit, UNISON's achievement as the biggest union in the UK and Ireland and the fastest growing union in Western Europe. He referred to all the members who were involved in industrial action in the past year and that they have the solidarity of the whole union.

Starting on the Wednesday, AGS Christina McAnea told how a survey had shown one of the major issues raised was on how Health staff are suffering serious sexual harassment at work.

Moving back to business we started with motion 126, How resourcing our branches is a UNISON priority and our amendment 126.1, which was lost. I could say sadly, but we got the agreement from the NEC that the group of 12 from the NEC will include SOG members, so we may have lost the amendment but did get what was wanted.

We continued through to lunch, after lunch we were treated to a rousing speech from our guest speaker - Mrs Barbara Tanyanyiwa, National Secretary, Women's Committee, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions.

Then business continued until the close, returning to 'the snake' when we could. Thursday was rule change day, moving through at a fast pace, points of order being raised after no more than four or five speakers including the movers, we saw our LGBT SOG win their rule change to have the Plus (+) added to LGBT, National Disabled Members were proud to be able to support them in this change, proudly wearing their support the + tee shirt (gifted by Hartlepool LG. from Northern Region.) We didn't get through all the rule changes but covered most of them.

The reprioritisation vote for the Friday also took place, we were thankful our motion 49 got through, and also made the front page of North-West region's newssheet, they were extremely impressed by the hard work that NDMC undertake and proved it by giving us the front page. As did motion 100 to make "2021 the year of the disabled worker" (thank you Scotland!).

Speeches were made on abuse in care homes, cuts in social care, tackling stress as well as bullying and harassment.

Then it was over. Gordon McKay gave his closing speech and thanks to those that had helped him in his year as UNISON president, and a great job he did too! On Friday afternoon the NEC voted in Josie Howell-Bird as president, our own Sian Stockham as senior vice-president, and, James Anthony as junior vice-president. Good luck to them all for the next year. Last but not least a huge thank-you for giving us the chance to be your voice at UNISON National Delegate Conference 2019.

Cath McGuinness and Kathleen Kennedy

National Delegate Conference Newssheet

I was elected to write the newssheet for the Disabled members at NDC this year.

I had a few plans in advance but when it came to it there were some quite specific requirements and I had to make sure that I covered all the relevant motions and the most important issues happening at conference.

So, I ensured that each newssheet covered everything that had happened the day before and the important things that were coming up the next day to ensure that everyone got the most relevant info.

I made sure everyone was aware of the relevant caucus meetings and fringe meetings of interest and I spent lots of time arranging photos of groups of delegates for various motions and amendments that were being highlighted in the newssheet. It was really interesting to see what went on behind the scenes of the conference and great to be able to take a different view point of conference. The difference between being a delegate and doing the newssheet was that time passed very quickly, particularly as the deadline drew closer each day!

An excellent conference with some historic motions passed, this one will stay in my memory for a long time. We voted to add the 'PLUS' (+) to LGBT to ensure we are a more inclusive organisation, we voted for Young Members to have their own conference and we voted to celebrate disability history month. It felt like an important conference for equalities.

Thanks to everyone who took part in photos and was interviewed for the newssheet.

Jane Carter

TUC Disabled Workers Conference

With a very sunny start to the TUC Disabled Workers Conference, the 1st session of this TUC conference was chaired by our very own Sian Stockham who was our UNISON Junior Vice President at the time (now senior!), and who was also re-elected unopposed to represent our UNISON disabled members on the TUC Disabled Workers Committee.

All 11 of our delegates attended, and spoke well on the motions that were selected to speak on. On behalf of UNISON'S Disabled Members, Sian moved UNISON'S motion number 6, "make disability pay reporting mandatory", it was passed unanimously, as were the other 18 motions on the agenda, Mental Health issues still appear to be one of our biggest battles, along with the harm that can be caused by all the difficulties many of us are faced with on a daily basis as disabled workers.

Conference went without much of a hitch, the fringe meetings were well attended, Tuesday saw the social night with a punk poetry and songs session, and on Wednesday there was a panel discussion held, hosted by the presiding chair, Sean McGovern along with 3 panel members.

The panel included Frank Sioen from Sweden, explaining that independent living in Sweden works via a CO-OP, that is managed by disabled people, this means that the disabled person keeps the choice of which assistant works better for them, he also said that in Portugal and Spain, some independent living support starts in one country and carries through to the other, he felt its important to pick the best options then scale them up, that the Swedish example is a good example of collective bargaining.

Questions were put forward to, and answered by the different panel members, including two questions from our UNISON delegation.

One, asking the panel to explain " how a National Independent Living Service will recognize and respect the devolution of health and social care, as health and social care are devolved issues and because UNISON is a UK wide union that represents members in devolved Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?"

The other query was related to national independent living support, "would PAs services like casualised working, still give them the flexibility to move around?"

The motion voted to be taken to TUC Congress was motion 5, "National Independent Living Support Service."

Unions that attended TUC Disabled workers conference = 22

Delegates = 186

Visitors = 9

Registered Observers = 5

Other attendees = 9

Cath McGuinness

Labour Link Forum report

Labour Link Forum took place in York 5th to 6th July. There were 21 motions on the agenda including our motion and amendment and one on social care which was of particular interest to disabled members.

Our motion on access to democracy passed with full support of the forum being well received as did our amendment to the gender pay gap adding disability pay gap to the mix.

I spoke on the crisis in social care motion highlighting the effects on disabled members and their carers and families.

The Forum was addressed by Dave Prentis and Richard Corbett MEP. Later there was a question and answer session with a panel of UNISON sponsored MPs.

Graeme Ellis

Labour Women's Conference

What a great honour to be a part of the reintroduced standalone, but policy making Women's Labour Party Conference! To be a part of this historic conference was so amazing! Spread over two days, the conference was held in Telford. UNISON's very own Labour Party candidate Katrina Gilman's home town, where Katrina is challenging for the parliamentary seat! You know we are all behind you Katrina!

Over 1,200 Women registered for conference, 600 CLP's, over 397 constituencies from across the country and 150 original motions submitted. The evening before was spent compositing motions, an unenviable task and went on well into the late evening before decisions were made

The composite motions from these eight groups constituted the formal business of the conference. Each of the policy debate lasted for 45 minutes and at the end of the debate a vote was taken. At this conference, speakers are chosen at random. The chairs pick speakers from raised hands from the floor. A most random and chaotic way of choosing speakers that I have ever seen I must say!

The disabled conference participants were once again assisted with floor walkers and assistance from start to finish of conference and this was greatly appreciated, especially for those who wished to be chosen to speak and could not raise their own hands. Generally access was very good both at the hotel and to and from at the centre as well as in the centre and we were given stickers on our passes for queue jumping when purchasing food and drinks. There was also a quiet room, which was very well used.

The UNISON delegation met to discuss the protocols of the conference and to agree speakers on motions and votes for the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee. All votes are unified as one vote from UNISON. At the start of conference, the report was moved by Jane Taylor Chair of the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee. The report was disputed, but there seemed no way to reference back any disputes, or any policy around what happens when the report is disputed. There were some amazing speeches by Katrina Gilman and Margaret Greenwood, (Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions). After some very interesting debates, the first three Policy debates; Women in the Workforce, Early Years, Education and Childcare and Pensions were all carried.

The first breakout sessions included; Community Organising, Organising for Equality – Unions Winning for Women, Underpaid and undervalued work, "Is equality Law fit for Purpose?", and Women's Officer Meet up. Then this was followed by another round of sessions; Community Organising, Labour Women's Network Sessions, Gender and Transport and Women and Social Security.

We then moved back into the main hall to hear a most inspirational speech by Dawn Butler, Shadow Secretary for State of Women and Equalities, who left us with three words to take away with us to give to other women; "encourage, empower and elevate". Very much on UNISON's line me thinks! This was followed by Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, who again left us very inspired and encouraged

at what the future could look like with decent pay, decent homes, an end to zero hours contracts and alleviate the necessity of food banks.

The afternoon policy debate was Violence against Women and Girls, which was of course carried. International Plenary was spent with an amazing time in the company of three phenomenal speakers from Africa - from Zimbabwe, from the National Women's Congress of South Africa and from Ghana, all of them spoke about their terrifying and horrendous experiences of women's injustice that they themselves had been through, as well as when raising Women's Rights issues, being involved in politics and the struggle to raise awareness for the end of violence against women and girls.

The evening began with the Social which very well attended and a great opportunity to meet other delegates.

Day 2

Conference opened early at 09:30. The mornings debates were; Abortion Rights, Universal Credit and Employment Support and Rights for Migrant Women, all of which were carried. There were some moving and amazing speeches on these motions. UNISON delegates were chosen to speak on all but one of the motions. We then had the votes collected from each individual on the Motions to Annual Conference and Women's Conference Arrangements Committee. The results would be announced at the end of the afternoon where possible. It was actually a very tense time!

Whilst the votes were being counted there were three training sessions being held; on one "Be a councillor" and another on Labour party campaigning and the last one on Membership Engagement.

Motions to the Labour Party Conference

- CLPs – Rights for Migrant Women
- Unions – Universal Credit

All remaining motions will go to Policy Commissioning.

Women's Conference Arrangement committee

Linda Hobson – UNISON, Anne Dean – GMB, Philippa Marsden – Unite, plus 3 from the CLPs

I have to say that throughout this conference, from the minute I arrived at the hotel on the Friday evening until I got in my car to drive home, (which included a personal farewell from Dawn Butler!), I felt completely included by the group, from making sure I had my room sorted to making sure I had something to eat, had my papers in large print before conference started, my access needs met at conference without any quibble, involved in conversations about conference and about voting and most importantly about what was going on at each session. So I enjoyed this experience so much more than last year, but it has been a learning curve for all of those involved.

Maggie Griffin

Report from Disabled members elected to the NEC

Names of NEC reps: Paula Carlyle (from June) and Angela Hamilton

Summary of activities

It's been a busy and interesting year representing Disabled Members on the National Executive Council (NEC) with issues such as Universal Credit (UC) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Climate Change and, of course Brexit which all impact on disabled people being high on the agenda.

During the year I've talked to Disabled Members from across the country about the issues we face every day in the workplace and wider society. I've heard stories of how lives are being devastated by cuts to benefits and services. I've witnessed increasing economic exclusion, social isolation and, in some cases, deteriorating health amongst our Disabled Members. And I have made sure all of these issues and more have been discussed at the NEC.

In December 2018 the General Secretary announced that UNISON was officially the biggest trade union in the UK. Not only is UNISON retaining members but we are actively recruiting new members. This is a remarkable achievement considering we have had after almost a decade of austerity and public sector job cuts.

The results of the survey into members experiences of PIP that I had previously requested were published in a report called 'Punished for going to work'. The report, which is believed to be the first by a trade union about workers experiences, highlighted major concerns and we are using this as evidence in our campaign to secure changes to the system.

UNISON plays an important role in a broad alliance of organisations seeking major changes to UC. As a result of our campaign work, we have secured increases to the work allowance for families with children and disabled people, a delay to 'managed migration to UC and successfully lobbied for the government to involve stakeholders including UNISON in the design of the managed migration process – this is a major departure from previous government practice. While these changes are welcome we know there is more to be done and we will continue to campaign for the role out of UC to be stopped and the system reformed.

At the February meeting the NEC agreed their motions for National Delegates Conference several of which, following my recommendations, included disability issues. One motion, on Stopping Social Insecurity, was particularly relevant to Disabled Members

By April we were preparing for National Delegate Conference with meetings coming thick and fast to draft amendments, agree NEC policy and decide speakers.

As I said last year being on the platform at NDC is quite an eye opener as you see all the work that goes on behind the scenes to help conference run smoothly. The NEC meet at 8.30 every morning during conference to discuss emergency motions,

changes to positions and a variety of other issues that can arise during conference so it's an extremely tiring week.

During conference I moved the motion on Stopping Social Insecurity which was passed overwhelmingly. When the time came for re-prioritisation I successfully lobbied NEC members to prioritise the motion to Make 2021 the year of the Disabled Worker. This motion passed unanimously, and I am looking forward to starting work on it soon.

At the end of conference Paula Carlyle who had been elected to the Disabled Members Female seat took up her position on the NEC. I know Paula is committed to representing Disabled Members and I am looking forward to working with her. I was elected unopposed to continue in the general disabled members seat on the NEC and would like to thank everyone who supported me.

The new NEC met at the end of conference to elect the new Presidential Team. The outcome of the election was President – Josie Bird (Northern); Senior Vice-President – our very own Sian Stockholm (Wales), who is the third NEC Member on National Disabled Members Committee; and completing the team new Junior Vice-President James Anthony. James is also Chair of Policy, Development and Campaigns Committee (PDCC) and has been very supportive of including Disabled Members issues in all our campaigning work and activities.

The NEC Committees that Disabled Members Representatives sit on are:

Angela Hamilton – PDCC and Labour Link
Paula Carlyle – PDCC

Keeping in touch

Meetings take place throughout the year and we will provide reports of the meetings we attend to National Disabled Members Committee for regional representative to circulate to members in each region.

Service Group Conferences

Community

Held at Southport Convention Centre on 1st – 3rd March 2019.

The Seminar and Conference started at lunch time on the Friday with sector meetings for Community and Voluntary Sector, Housing Association Sector with Gavin Edwards (National Officer) and Major Charities Sector followed by the Seminar.

The Housing Association (HA) Sector Meeting

Gavin firstly gave an update from last October's meeting for the sector, mainly the results of the elections and posts each held. Gerry Harrison had been elected Vice Chair of the HA Sector Committee and also to represent that Committee on the Service Group Executive. Gavin Edwards gave an update on UNISON's 'Violence at Work Charter' that Housing Associations are being encouraged to sign up to. So far 12 housing associations have signed up to it.

There were also discussions on Housing Association Pensions. UNISON has written to the chair of the board of Social Housing Pension (SHP) scheme. Pay deals were talked about, many were between 1.5 and 2.5%, London Associations said that they could get a bonus, but a pay rise and bonus was related to their production of work and they may not receive all of the things dependant on their management. Targets, sickness absence was also taken into account.

Universal credit was having an impact on the stress levels of staff having to deal with customers going onto Universal credit.

Seminar

The chair of the Community SGE, John Gray welcomed everyone to the Seminar and Conference. He spoke about the increase of membership from 70,000 to 83,000 during the year. The SGE have been working on sleeping shifts, which is now being taken to appeal in court. They have also worked on the Violence at work charter and signing up employers, as well as all the motions passed from last year's conference.

Christina McAnea, Assistant General Secretary for Bargaining, Negotiating and Equalities gave a speech on the overall picture of how the union was working. She talked about zero hours contracts, 3 million care workers on less than minimum wage as they are not paid for travel time between calls and jobs get changed during the working day, she also spoke about the UNISON's involvement in the ongoing court case on pay for 'Sleep ins', this is now going to appeal court.

UNISON's membership is made up of one million women and two hundred and fifty thousand men. We are the biggest union in both the charities and housing associations. This year UNISON has been campaigning about racism, trafficking and refugees, as well as initiating a stop sexual harassment at work campaign, which includes third-party harassment. She said that the community and voluntary sector is the future of the union with members joining on line and using direct debit.

There were also two guest speakers, Rebecca Long Bailey, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who spoke about the Labour party's Industrial Strategy and Dr Lydia Hayes from Cardiff University.

Saturday started with a choice of 3 workshops sessions to attend.

- The Violence at Work Charter Campaign – Gavin Edwards National Officer
- Lay Democracy in UNISON how it works – Beth Bickerstaffe, Director of the Executive Office
- Unison Social Care Strategy, Scared, skint and sceptical – How can UNISON recruit and organise vulnerable workers in the social care sector?
- Women and Pensions- delivered by Glyn Jenkins UNISON head of pensions.

This was followed by a very interesting and amusing speech by Simon Nunn from The National Housing Federation, this was followed by a Q&A session.

Saturday lunchtime Gerry and Jean chaired the disabled members caucus meeting. There were 11 members present and we discussed motions 1, 11, and 14 all relating to disability. Details of the 2019 Network meeting dates were passed to everyone present.



Gerry and Jean

Conference

The Conference itself started at 2pm on Saturday, Debate was opened with Jean Sowley Moving Motion 1, Bargaining for good Mental Health policies in Community workplaces, Peter Daley spoke during the debate on Motion 12, Mental Health support for our members, Conference Debate ended with Gerry Harrison moving motion 14 Making Community workplaces safe and accessible, this being the last motion on the Agenda. Conference was closed at 16:55 on the Saturday.

All motions on the conference agenda were carried. The 3 Disability motions had the greatest number of speakers, raising personal examples and support.

Gerry Harrison & Jean Sowley

Energy Conference

The motions submitted by the National Disabled Members Committee were:

Motion 9 – Training Mental Health First-Aiders In Energy Workplaces and
Motion 10 - Negotiating Disability Leave Policies with Energy Employers

The Conference was addressed by Jenny McCall (previously Middleton), Vice President of the Energy Service Group Executive.

Opening the conference, Jenny said members in the energy sector are facing job losses and continued uncertainty. In turbulent times she is proud to say that UNISON is continuing to work for its members on a daily basis, and will continue to promote and encourage education for our members. Branches are working hard to recruit members, however the energy sector needs a bigger voice in UNISON.

Guest speaker Rebecca Long-Bailey MP for Salford and Eccles also acknowledged the turbulent times for the energy sector and how important it was for UNISON to continue to recruit and grow. She acknowledged all the continued hard work UNISON is doing for all members, especially with all the pressures on staff and the uncertainty of jobs. She also spoke about NEA - National Energy Action. This is the national charity working to end fuel poverty in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Around 4 million UK households are in fuel poverty, unable to afford to live in a warm, dry home. UNISON is continuing to liaise with Labour MPs to ensure they're focusing on the right issues and the plans under a Labour government, for the energy market.

All the motions were carried.

Claire Aylwin

Water, Environment and Transport Conference

Unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances, neither delegate was able to attend this year's conference, so the disabled members motions fell.

Health Conference

Callum and I had only met briefly at the National Disabled Conference where we were successfully nominated to attend as Disabled Delegates to the Health Care Service Group Annual Conference 2019 we were both very excited and looked forward to representing Disabled members.

Day One 8 April

Opening of Conference

- Welcome and introduction by Gordon McKay, UNISON President
- Standing Orders Committee Report
- Address by Roz Norman, Chair, Service Group Executive Committee
- Service Group Executive Annual Report 2018/19

This was followed by a Launch of Our Health Heroes Awards

We were then shown a film: 'Voices from the front line – Porter' this was well received by Conference delegates/visitors.

We then quickly moved on to motions for debate as the 2 motions and 2 amendments that had been submitted by the National Disabled Committee all fell under either Health & Wellbeing or Equalities Issues both of these really important areas were being heard on the Day 1.

After read the final agenda and order of business we became aware that the motions/amendments were on either the morning or afternoon session. We decided that Susan would move the amendments and motions and Callum would Chair the Disabled Caucus.

Motions/Amendments submitted by The National Disabled Committee:

- 36 The NHS England Workforce Disability Equality Standard
- 38 Health Employers and workforce adjustment passports
- 16.1 Health and Wellbeing of staff – the role of Occupational Health Departments
- 25.1 Tackling bullying in the NHS – a collective call to action (part of Composite C (25, 25.1, 26)).

Happily all of the disabled members' speeches were well received and also Conference agreed them

Disabled Members caucus meeting

Callum chaired this meeting with the full support of Pat Heron (National Disabled Committee Member). Pat was extremely friendly and welcoming offering us both any support or help we may require. Pat went above and beyond and we will always be grateful that Pat was in attendance at the Conference.

The Disabled Members Caucus was reasonably well attended, but unfortunately with complaints around access needs and also the Conference centre in Bournemouth being very hilly. If you were not lucky enough to get a hotel on the level it would be a taxi ride. After a discussion around Disability issues and concerns, the meeting ended.

The conference was well attended, and many interesting debates, also lots of well written speeches, also some very sad stories told by delegates I always feel that the personal ones are the most hardest to listen to and more often than not they get a standing ovation.

Callum spoke on some moving motions relating to the Ambulance Service, the pressure on ambulance crew is increasing daily, with members being off with work related stress, and some taking their own lives, only recently in Oxfordshire over the past 2 weeks 2 ambulance staff members have taken their own lives. This is a sad reflection on the NHS in crisis and the shortfall of staff across the whole of the NHS. The NHS needs to be properly funded and staffed, staff are unable to cope with the work pressures and this is even harder for our disabled colleagues, staff are expected to do the work of 2 or even 3 in some cases due to lack of staff and staff sickness, hopefully some of the motions that have been passed will make a difference in the future.

Callum Lamb and Susan Parkinson

Higher Education Conference

It was an interesting day and we were glad to have been chosen to attend. The conference was in Nottingham and while there were no motions to move on behalf of disabled members at this conference, it was good to see a wide range of people from across the country in the sector in attendance. From our notes, the main points we thought worth reporting back were:

Speaker Elizabeth Bowles: Equality and Human Rights Commission (HRC) spoke on the HRC Focus on racial harassment - low level of confidence in reporting - also staff are not likely to report. The HRC will be looking at types of racial harassment and where they are taking place and want to build a complete picture of the full cycle for HE staff and students (staff on staff, staff on students, students on students, students on staff). They will also examine the questions of:

- What constitutes effective action?
- What has been successful?
- Routes of redress and access to justice.

The statutory responsibility will be reviewed in terms of adequacy. The enquiry will be looking at processes, asking 3rd parties and are also interested in good practise. Report will not name individual HEIs in order to preserve anonymity. Aim to publish by Autumn 2019.

Key motions:

Composite A: Ten years of delaying, where is our 35 hour working week?

Conference heard that only 40.8% of institutions have the standard working week. (48.9% of Pre 1992 universities verses 24.4% of Post 1992 universities). In addition to this employers continue to refer to a 35 hour working week when calculating their compliance with the foundation living wage. Why is this composite particularly important to disabled members? It disproportionately affects our disabled members at these institutions as disabled staff are more likely to be in low paid jobs than non-disabled staff. Therefore where institutions do not have the 35 hour working week but use it to incorrectly calculate their living wage compliance they are failing to pay our low paid disabled members a fair living wage. We already know that the cost of living can higher for disabled people and their families than non disabled people and their families, it was good to see this motion passed so that the Higher Education Service Group executive will now include the requirement of a standard 35 hour working week separately to this year's pay negotiations, or if not included separately, work with other HE trade unions to coordinate a separate national campaign of local bargaining and produce materials to include guidance on negotiating and achieving locally.

Motion 7: Fair Work convention in Scottish Campuses

This motion called for the Higher Education Service Group executive to press the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) to promote the best employment terms and conditions for Scottish universities. This included promoting fairness and equality in terms and conditions for all Scottish HE sector members, amalgamate best practices to create gold standard for policies such as sickness policies and annual leave entitlement. This motion was carried and we hope to see

positive action to achieve fairness and equality and issues relate to terms and conditions directly tackled.

Motion 9: Pension schemes being changed to ones with less employer contributions.

Staffordshire Uni moved staff to a different employer - set up a private company so that they had different rights and employer contributions were significantly less (18% down to 10 or 8%) which amounts to between £9 to £15K less on retirement and poverty in old age or no retirement.

Motion 11: Privatisation and outsourcing

Contractors want to take on University work to make a profit from the University, this pushes student fees up and erodes quality and job security and workers rights. Outsourced workers need to be supported to be as ethical as possible, to be earning minimum wage, have a pension and be members of TUs. Kings College has been successful in outsourced staff gaining rights to pensions through the University. In house must be part of the tendering process.

Cut costs at the expense of members terms and conditions

Commitment of current government to move to private providers. Competition and marketisation. Campaign to oppose - plus political view. Taxation not tuition fees - labour party is in agreement. Push Labour to renew its commitment to back. Kings and Goldsmiths cleaners were brought back in house - but have to take to a political level.

Motion 13: Supporting members with Mental Health problems

Speakers for this motion told conference that while across the sector there was good work being done, but often the focus is largely about students, ignoring the staff need because student mental health grabs headlines and as a result there is more attention and investment to support students. Mental health does not discriminate and has no regard for age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or if you are a student, staff member or activist. For example reasonable adjustments not being met for our members with a mental health conditions. Too many times the employer goes down capability route and unemployment. Additionally most people with a mental health condition are diagnosed by age 24 - we need to start protecting our emerging workforce. This motion was passed which means we will see the HE Service group executive take forward a wealth of actions including:

- Encourage branches to seek active involvement in their own institutions enactment of the #stepchange initiative
- Campaign for Trade Union representatives to be a part of the UUK Mental Wellbeing in the HE working group. This will ensure that there is a staff voice and help balance the student/ staff balance.

Fringe meetings: Young members in the work place/Year of the young worker

Alice attended the lunch time fringe meeting led by Kendal Bromley Bewes the Chair of the Young Members forum. It was great to hear more about what young members are doing this year for the Year of Young members as well as hearing advice on how branches can recruit young members to their branch and to branch activist roles. One quote from Kendal that resonated with me was 'Young members are so much more than just young members, we are disabled, LGBTQ+, branch treasurers, chairs

and secretaries.” I would encourage all members and branches to engage with year of young workers to help ensure not just the future of our union but the now as well.

Liza Aspell and Alice Smith

Local Government Conference

Business started promptly at 9.30am on the Sunday morning with UNISON president Gordon Mackay at the helm, with the announcements, standing orders report, and the Local Government service group executive annual general report, then we were off

Going through the motions, the difficulties faced by libraries at breaking point, knife crimes on the up, the cuts to youth services, the dangers to youth work profession, how housing is out of reach for many, the crisis in social care, the importance of continuing to promote the Ethical Care Charter, and rebuilding the housing development workforce of local government authorities.

All of this before lunch, then it was off to our 1st Caucus meeting for Disabled members, which was well attended by over 20+ UNISON members, including our reps Clare Aylwin and David Croll, from Energy conference, also being held at the same time.

One question that was raised was on the internal passport for reasonable adjustments for UNISON activists, and when it would be put into practice. Members expressed frustration at having to always fill in reasonable adjustments. It was explained that it was currently being piloted for national committee members and it was hoped it would be rolled out to all activists in the future.

We encouraged members to attend the Equalities stall, and support our motions 11, 'Negotiating disability leave policies with local government employers' and 12, 'Exemptions from hot-desking-a reasonable adjustment for disabled workers'.

Also our amendments 33.2 on housing, particularly accessible housing, and 38.1 apprenticeships in further education colleges. All of these were moved on the Monday and carried.

After lunch, we had a short film on Local Service Champions Campaign, followed by our first Guest speaker Neville Southall, (yes the ex-Welsh international goalkeeper, who played for Everton) but now proud UNISON activist in Cymru/Wales who now works with troubled youngsters and children at the Canolfan yr Afon pupil referral unit in Ebbw Vale Wales.

Quietly, calmly and without notes, he spoke of an education system where pupils are judged entirely on results and GCSEs, leaving some to struggle. On a wider level, he explains his intense dislike for the Conservative Party on the basis that "I think they've killed more people than I ever met." He's appalled by the homelessness and poverty that is blighting communities. Neville also raised the struggle of LGBT people – he's become a passionate supporter of LGBT people.

For me personally, I loved his thoughts on our union, "I think the best thing you can ever do is be a union rep ... you fight for the person who hasn't got a voice. You fight for the 'little' people – and all the 'little' people make the country great".

This led the way for a great afternoon of debates, on local government apprenticeships - same work sub-par pay, campaigning on pay, safeguarding LGPS investments, regional pay bargaining, food standards agency- pay terms and conditions. Then we went onto Education and children's services, with motions on Bringing back the Education Maintenance Allowance, further education colleges, the education funding formula, cuts to pastoral support in schools, supporting schools, and how our school support staff are the unsung heroes.

Monday was suddenly upon us, and another great day for debates, including our own motions, we tackled motions on, zero hours contracts, negotiating disability leave policies with local government employers, increasing access for young workers to training and professional development, (remember it is the year of the young members), the breakthrough in tackling stress, bullying and harassment, women, wellness and work, exemptions from hot-desking the undermining of terms and conditions, and LGBT- the + factor. Before we knew it, it was lunchtime, Gordon reminded us all "prompt 2pm".

After lunch we had our international guest speaker, "Jucelia Vargas Vierira de Jesus" The president of SISERP, the local government workers' union in Santa Catarina state, Brazil. She thanked UNISON for its help in helping her union prepare for a Privatisation onslaught. Ms Vierira de Jesus, went on to say that to understand what's happening in Brazil now, you need to understand the past. Brazil was the last of the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888, while Ms Vierira de Jesus describes patriarchy as "a brand" in the country, with women "treated as inferior beings". Citing just some of the organisations and groups that have created a history of resistance in the country, she says that, eventually, "we elected a factory worker, who raised his fellow workers, making us believe a different future was possible ... Lula de Silva, former president."

Then came last year's elections. Ms Vierira de Jesus said that "fake news" and online interference – including by elements in the US – aided the election of the far-right Jair Bolsonaro as president. Violence, unemployment, hunger and poverty are growing. The government has set about dismantling health provisions and social security reforms that end protections – particularly affecting women and the elderly.

Then, we were on the last lap, social care cuts, a state of crisis in local government, councils at breaking point, income generation, funding and the state of Northern Local Government, cuts in council budgets, save local government services. Then finally came recruitment, discussions on facility time, Black Members mentoring scheme in local Government, and a motion not prioritized but reached and also passed "recruiting and organizing fire and rescue staff."

The end of 2 extremely charged days, of passion, dedication, and fight, yes, UNISON -the largest union in the country- members had spoken. Many thanks for giving us the opportunity to represent National Disabled Members. Not forgetting the excellent work by our news reporter Jane Carter, and our National Officer, Deirdre Costigan.

Cath McGuinness and Bev Miller

Police and Justice Conference

The 2018 Police and Justice Conference was a reflection of the current membership of this Service Group. Although there was a marked increase in the attendance of National Probation Staff group, overall the Conference saw a reduction in attendees. However, there was a positive which was very apparent and that was the strong reflections of the current position of the Probation Service, with representations made by delegates, motions and presentations that were moved, debated and supported.

Guest Speaker: Louise Haigh MP, Shadow Police Minister

Louise spoke openly about her frustrations in government around the main disability issues such as Universal Credit (UC), PIP appeals and the lack of job opportunities for disabled people. She also spoke about her plans to re-instate the disability element of UC referencing the recent confirmation from the Government that some people will be over £2,000 worse off. There was an open question and answer session which was well mannered, respectful and Louise did try to answer every question.

Marcellus Baz: Switch Up Programme:

Marcellus gave a poignant and frank presentation, speaking about his life experiences and achievements, which lead him to opening a boxing academy in Nottingham. The audience at the conference were silent and tearful as he recanted times in his earlier years where situations nearly cost him his life. Marcellus and his team of staff has given hundreds of young people better life prospects, through personal development and boxing whilst engaging with positive activities and support back into education and training. The project continues to be a success.

The Conference Hall delegates experienced extremely emotional speeches, in particular the speech on mental health and PTSD, also delegates sharing their struggles, moved the whole room. These were but a few examples of where we are currently at, in regards to, how the subject of mental health is dealt with in the workplace.

Workshops:

1. Tackling Sexual Harassment, Sarah Hayes, UNISON

This workshop looked at using education to change culture and what needs to change and why, whilst representing members and working with employers.

2. LGPS, Glyn Jenkins, UNISON Pensions officer

This session was well attended. Glyn explained about the different pensions and highlighted areas which members needed to be aware of. Attendees were able to work out what they would receive when it came time to getting their pensions. Glyn also discussed the different situations where members could be eligible to get their pensions early and what the overall value their pensions stood at.

3. Taking Stress Claims, David Coulthard, Thompsons

Well attended workshop. David spoke in depth about the impact of stress and how members could get help in cases of members being off work due to stress. What was both important and eye opening was the fact that providing a sick certificate that

states that the member is off sick with 'stress' alone does not give a member enough protection if they were to find themselves in the unfortunate position of seeking legal redress. There has to be a diagnosed mental illness that would be exacerbated by stress.

4. Using Social Media, Meg Burke, UNISON, Comms

5. Police Staff Legal Guide Paula Porter, Thompsons

The attendees were split into groups and given the task to look at a range of issues relating to a new support guide that Thompsons had been asked to pull together. We looked at the 'Barring Lists' and 'Vetting'. The idea was to talk about rep experiences and use best practice to be able to put into the guide. The conclusion of the first day in conference Thompsons Solicitors hosted their Delegates Drinks Reception where attendees could mingle and network whilst sharing a beverage. This was well attended and was a good end to the evening.

The second day commenced with Home Office Police front line review. There was a presentation by officers who were carrying out the comprehensive Home Office front line review. There was a lot to get though, however the whole session ended up being about the selection process for attendees.

The Future Of Probation

Ben Priestley gave a presentation on the current pay review. It was many years since Probation staff has had a pay rise. A consultation was going to take place between the 15th October and 8th November where staff would have the opportunity to vote to accept or reject the pay proposals. This meeting was well attended and many questions were asked. It is a very unsure time for Probation staff. Although this does not affect the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC's) decision was taken to cover both, as although there had been a split in National Probation Service, in due time they also be affected.

Disabled members caucus

During the disabled members caucus several issues were raised:

- The distance the disabled delegates had to travel to get to the venue.
- The lack of provisions for people with dietary needs.
- Lack of conveniences to buy refreshments and the high cost of food.
- During conference delegates were not allowed to bring drinks into the hall, the ushers stated that it was not permitted. However, people on the podium were allowed to bring in drinks.
- Distance to travel to Bournemouth, was exhausting, this was not taken into account.

Summary

Bournemouth was not the most user friendly town, with all the hills and walkways, it was a difficult place to be. On the plus side the parks were picturesque. The conference itself gave a great opportunity to meet people and formulate new friends/contacts and catch up with old friends/colleagues.

Chelsea Skervin and David Smith

Self Organised Group Conferences

Black Members Conference

I attended the National Black Members Conference in Llandudno, Cymru on 18th January 2019 to 20th January 2019.

The Annual Report was passed and the standing orders reports were passed. The guest speakers were David Prentis, Cllr David Hawkins Mayor of Llandudno as well as Gordon McKay, UNISON President and Carol Sewell.

The speakers were very good.

Emergency Motion 1 'Racism is real' was also passed.

I attended the fringe meeting about Racism and tackling youth crime and work shop on Black History.

The social was very good there were over 600 attending conference.

I moved motion 12 on behalf of National Disabled members.

Lincoln Paul Davis

Women's Conference

Conference was once again this year attended by the most women ever breaking last year's record, this Conference as always is fast paced, passionate, and friendly, the seminars were well attended, as were the fringe meetings. The speakers were very interesting, my personal favourite was Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP, shadow minister for sport, and how she became a Dr, then became involved with politics, I don't know how she manages to juggle everything, a wife, mother, doctor, and MP, all I can say to that is WOW.

Gordon McKay spoke about women and poverty, he raised issues that he had seen throughout his lifetime, such as women being denied the right to a bank account, mortgages, abortions. He also talked about Low Pay and Food Banks;- the double onslaught faced by women today. Cuts to the Youth Service and Social Care. Private companies such as Carillion collapsing. Gordon emphasised that officially UNISON is the biggest union in the UK. 18,000 new members have joined since November many of them women. Gordon's chosen charity is in Malawi and serves 22 villages. This will certainly impact on many people particularly women and children.

We both moved the motions on behalf of National Disabled Members Committee, Motion 23 protecting extending and enforcing disabled women's rights, and Motion 36 Misogyny and domestic abuse experienced by disabled women; both motions were successfully carried, as were all the motions at conference.

There was an extremely moving speech from a delegate who spoke about sexual harassment in its most severe form in the workplace this moved me to tears.

It was great to see the full presidential team there and our general secretary Dave Prentis, as well as support for the striking care-worker speakers from the conference floor.

The fringe meetings and workshops attended generated lots of questions, particularly the workshop on Women and Pensions.

Hustings were held for National Delegate conference, votes cast and counted, it was great to see that two of the standing delegates were new and had felt empowered by this conference to stand for national delegates conference to represent women (sadly only one could win), also the two motions being taken to National Delegates conference were announced as motion 10 Call it out! Supporting young women to challenge workplace sexual harassment, and motion 29 menopause and the workplace.

Thank-you for the opportunity to represent UNISON's Disabled Women Members on your behalf.

Sharon Carby and Cath McGuinness.

LGBT Conference

I attended Conference as the NDMC rep, though fully supported by other national Committee members, Louise Ashcroft, Bev Miller and Lisa Dempster who were attending in other capacities.

I attended a packed disabled caucus meeting it was great to see so many disabled members supporting the caucus, we discussed our motions and reasons on why our amendment had been ruled out of order. SOC felt that it drew away from the original meaning of the motion. The caucus requested that Lucy move reference back when SOC report two was moved on Saturday.



I also attended the Local Government meeting where Mike Short gave an overview of the work the service group have undertaken. He talked about ensuring equality was a priority for the service group. There were several ideas raised for motions to the National service group conference which the national LGBT committee will submit on our behalf.

Labour Link was also well attended, with feedback given on the recent Labour party conference, including that whilst access and reasonable adjustments had improved there is still work to be done.

James Anthony gave a brief feedback on the work of LGBT Labour, which will continue to be affiliated to the labour party but still a separate body so they are able to challenge and promote LGBT equality within the party.

Saturday was straight to business. We started with introductions of the chair and welcome. The election of tellers was agreed as were the SOC reports. We then held a silent remembrance for members we have lost, always a poignant moment and a time to reflect on why we do what we do. The annual report was agreed and then it was on to the motions.

Conference moved quite quickly and we debated motions under the sections of Introducing and Negotiating LGBT Equality followed by International Work. We also got through all the motions under Campaigning. Motions including the Gender Recognition Act reform, composite A on Trans rights, composite B on conversion therapy and same sex attraction disorder were all discussed and supported by delegates without opposition.

Our first guest speaker – Christina McAnea, UNISON's Assistant General Secretary spoke well on issues affecting the LGBT community.

After lunch the debates on motions continued and we heard from our serving guest speaker – Alison Lowe from Touchstone, a mental health charity.

I then attended a workshop on standing for public office – back to basics. It was agreed that the core of successful campaigning is having clear goals, strategy, getting the message out there and reviewing. The workshop discussed ways of getting involved at local levels not just as councillors and MPs but also standing as reps on local clinical commissioning and hospital boards, Police liaison groups and standing as a Magistrate. Also, very important public roles. Katrina Gilman talked about her work as a parliamentary candidate in the General Election last year and the fact she was able to help some of her constituents with case work and signing letters a parliamentary candidate got a far better response and outcome for the people concerned.

Sunday was another busy day with hustings held for delegates to National Delegate conference (2 women delegates were chosen). I spoke on Motion discussing the UN report on the failing of the UK government to protect rights of disabled people, it was a hard act to follow the great speech of Louise Ashworth who moved the motion on behalf of the National LGBT Committee. We also chose motions for NDC19 NDC3 – Amendment to Unison rule B2.3 and D5.1.4 and NDC4 – Towards a more inclusive lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) self-organised group.

There was an excellent speech by our final guest speaker, UNISON President Gordon McKay which was very well received and we managed to debate and vote on ALL motions and amendments, including emergency motions on bigotry, support for LGBT+ people in Poland and Brazil and LGBT education in Scotland.

This was a great, inspiring conference and a lot of business was covered. I spoke on a couple of motions about the impact on our trans women from bigotry spread through social media and the media and the need to recruit more young members.

While Harrogate was a lovely place to visit, sadly there were some issues with both transphobia and homophobia which we hope will be addressed for future conferences.

Carl Phillips

Deaf (BSL Native Users) Caucus report

We, Iain & Gillian from Deaf Caucus worked hard with the National Disabled Members Committee over the year 2019 to achieve 3 motions from the last years' conference. We are pleased to say that we have now completed a guide for Stewards to understand how they can approach and help Deaf members when in need such as knowing how to book British Sign Language interpreters and their reasonable adjustment requests for any events within UNISON, at all levels.

We still work with the committees and the local government service group to try and improve accessibility for Deaf members who want to vote at the polling stations and guide to train the polling station staff to understand the needs of Deaf voters such as interpreters and language.



We continue do our campaign to get our language – British Sign Language - to be officially recognised by the government by getting a good example from the Scottish parliament who accept our language only in Scotland through a law known as BSL (Scotland) Act.

We have a few Deaf members attending to our network days in London who have not been to any UNISON events before and they have opened their eyes to how much UNISON can support them, which they didn't realise for many years, and that they do have a couple of Deaf national committee members that can support them.

We were told that few more Deaf members will be able to attend at this years' conference both delegates and visitors but a good number are expected to attend.

Iain Scott-Burdon & Gillian Jeffrey

Black caucus report

The Black Disabled Members Caucus has been operating in difficult circumstances for an extended period of time. We continue to deal with this Government's benefits reform, which impacts on many members, their extended families, and other citizens, who are being migrated from one benefit to another.

We as a Black Disabled Member Caucus are very aware of the Government's immigration policy, and the hostile environment being carried out against Black people, their families and dependents who migrated to the UK between the late 1940s-1980s. This includes those who arrived here on HMS Windrush, and are now elderly, have long term health conditions and may be disabled. Their families and dependents may be in union membership, or may have been unionised many years ago. We are concerned that people who came here as children are being deported, held in detention, being denied medical treatment, benefits and pensions as part of this hostile environment campaign.



The Caucus continues to raise Black Disability issues across the union. We ensure motions going to other parts of the union have a Black Disabled member input. We support Black members who stand for the Chairs and Co Vice Chairs positions. Many of our past and present members have gained valuable experience of chairing this national committee. Others have gone on to chair other Branch, Regional and National Committees. We also have had members on the National Executive. Our successes have been many it was a Black Caucus member that worked with the National Officer to prompt our unions response to the Governments attempt to

remove the Lay member position from Employment Tribunals. We continue to ensure that at least one session of Conference is chaired by a Black Caucus member.

We understand there is to be a review of caucus representation and we have discussed this in our network meetings and submitted a motion to conference on the subject.

Over past year we have worked with the National Committee, on its work programme. We thank the National Committee on its support in carrying on the work re Benefit reform. Also the motion that extended a Legal consultation with a solicitor if the member had immigration issues because of the Governments hostile environment campaign.

Peter chaired the two Caucus Network days, as the other rep could not attend due to workload issues. There were members from a number of regions in attendance-it is good to say that more members are becoming active because of their attendance at either our conference, or the Network Days .

We are also moving three motions and would welcome your support.

Finally we ask you to become more active, attend your Branch Committee check whether your branch has a position to support or vote against the motions being heard at our conference.

We will be on hand to assist Black disabled members writing speeches or wanting to speak at any stage

Peter Daley and Veronica Davies

Women's caucus

This year both Network Days were well attended – there has been an increase in numbers in recent years. This year we were nearly twenty, despite the fact that one falls at the end of the Scottish school term and the other at the beginning of August.



In June when we met we agreed on 3 motions which all were successful on getting on the conference agenda

- 1) Disabled women and sickness absence
- 2) Accessible domestic abuse services
- 3) Not just a bit of banter: tackling sexual harassment of disabled women in the workplace

In the August Network Day we had Josie Irwin, UNISON National Women's Officer, give us an update on UNISON's sexual harassment project and we had a good discussion on this and fed in some useful information which in particularly affects disabled women members in their workplace.

Many of the women who attend these network days are also attending National Disabled Members' Conference but some aren't and yet they feel part of the conference as they been involved with writing or amending motions for our conference.



Some of the women have already agreed from the Network Days to move one of our motions or amendments but both Pat and myself are always available to assist other women to do so. We discussed having a drop-in session at the beginning of the conference and hope this will be in place to encourage and assist women who are first time delegates to have the confidence to speak at conference

Pat Heron and Kathleen Kennedy
Co-Chairs of Disabled Women Caucus

LGBT caucus

The caucus meeting at 2018 disabled members' conference saw an increase in attendance. Jacqueline Jones and Carl Phillips were elected for the 2019 committee cycle; also Pauline Cole and Alex de Winter were elected to represent LGBT disabled members on standing orders for this year's conference.

Carl was also elected at one of the deputy co-chairs of National Committee, chairing sessions of the committee meeting and policy work group. The Chairs group deal with any business requiring work outside of the committee meeting cycle.

This year the caucus lost a number of members leaving the national committee due to change of job role and retirement. The caucus would like to give thanks to Jacqueline Jones, Lisa Dempster and David Mills, for their contribution to the work of the caucus and supporting the work of the group. The LGBT caucus has been heavily involved with the work of the National Committee work plan. We have participated in both the working groups of the committee.



LGBT disabled members Supporting “the Plus” at National Delegate Conference

Bev Miller and Carl were elected to attend the TUC Disabled Workers Conference and moved UNISON's motion on behalf of the delegation. This was great opportunity to promote to other unions how UNISON works with self-organisation. A number of the caucus members from the committee attended both Local Government and National Delegate Conference in Liverpool this year; we were able to network with other delegates, encouraging them to get more involved with Disabled LGBT self-organisation. Caucus members spoke on a wide number of issues including supporting Non- Binary Members and Trans Equality. Another major focus this year has been to support National LGBT Committees campaign to add the “PLUS” to the group's name. The name change was unanimously passed at national delegate conference this year, congratulations to all who worked so hard to discuss and

campaign support for this important step for UNISON. Bev & Louise are currently auditing UNISON policies and documents to ensure they are Non-Binary inclusive.

We held two well attended network meetings in June and August at UNISON Centre. Carl gave an update on the national committee work plan and the caucus involvement in the work plan at the June meeting. Due to Jacqueline's retirement, the caucus had sent out a request for expressions of interest for a women member to stand for the remaining of this year's committee cycle. Two members stood and after an election Leigh Fredson from Knowsley Branch was elected to work along side Carl till our meeting at conference. Congratulations to Leigh, she chaired our August network day.

We discussed a number of issues looking at communication and information provision for Disabled LGBT members. We also talked in depth around moving forward the work for non-binary equality; there is still varying levels of knowledge around the issues faced by non-binary members within the group. We then proposed our second motion on this matter to start a wider conversation. The caucus discussed the shocking rise in homophobic protests and lack of education around same sex relationships and families. The group were very concerned on the lack of action from central government on the No Outsiders education program in Birmingham.



NDMC Deputy Co-Chair Carl Phillips speaking to delegates on Disabled members stall at National Delegate Conference

This discussion also raised issues around how we gender specific language to identify people. Instead of using "she/he, him/her" at meetings we could refer to "the member in the red top" or "next speaker" etc. This included using the National LGBT Committee's presentation on Non-Binary Inclusion. If you have not seen this please request a copy from disabilityissues@unison.co.uk.

We have attended as many Pride and LGBT events as we were able to, members of the caucus join Northwest UNISON Members at the Bi Centenary Memorial March and rally for the victims of the Peterloo massacre in Manchester 16 August 1819.

Carl Phillips, Jacqueline Jones and Leigh Fredson

4. National Disabled Members Committee 2019

Eastern

Kathy Bole (until April 2019)
Joanna Vanderhoof (from May 2019)
Suzanne Williams

East Midlands

Chelsea Skervin

Greater London

Sarah Saunders
Kim Silver (NDMC Deputy Co-Chair)

Northern

Cath McGuinness (NDMC Co-Chair)
Stephen Powers

Northern Ireland

Amanda Sweetlove

North West

Lisa Dempster (until April 2019)
Graeme Ellis (NDMC Co-Chair)

Scotland

Kathleen Kennedy
Tony Slaven

South Eastern

Abdul Rahman

South West

Jane Carter
Gerry Harrison

Cymru/Wales

Neelo Farr
Peter Williams

West Midlands

Paul Davis
Hilary Mellor

Yorkshire and Humberside

Kuldeep Bajwa
Heather Briggs

Black members Caucus

Peter Daley

Veronica Davies

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus

Leigh Fredson (from June 2019)

Jacqueline Jones (until June 2019)

Carl Phillips (NDMC Deputy Co-Chair)

Deaf (native BSL users) Caucus

Gillian Jeffrey

Iain Scott-Burdon

National Black Members Committee

Sudeep Bone (until March 2019)

Tansaim Hussain-Gul (from March 2019)

Carol Sewell

National LGBT Committee

Louise Ashworth

Bev Miller

National Women's Committee

Pat Heron

Katrina Murray

NEC

Paula Carlyle (from June 2019)

Angela Hamilton

Sian Stockham

