



Conference Bulletin

March 2021

Special Delegate Conference 2021

UNISON Conference Office

conferences@unison.co.uk

020 7121 5123

This bulletin contains the timetable and information for
2021 Special Delegate Conference.

**Please note that both motions and delegations can only be submitted online.
There are no paper forms.**

Special Delegate Conference 2021 will be online starting 9.30am Tuesday 15 June, ending 11.45am Thursday 17 June 2021.

**This is a Special Delegate Conference and will be held online.
Web access will be required to participate.**

Day 1	Tuesday 15 th June		
	Start	End	Break Start – 15 minutes
Session 1	09.30am	11.45am	10.30am
Session 2	1.00pm	3.15pm	14.00pm
Webinar	5.00pm	6.00pm	No Break
Day 2	Wednesday 16 th June		
	Start	End	Break Start – 15 minutes
Session 3	09.30am	11.45am	10.30am
Session 4	1.00pm	3.15pm	14.00pm
Webinar	5.00pm	6.00pm	No Break
Day 3	Thursday 17 th June		
	Start	End	Break Start – 15 minutes
Session 5	09.30am	11.45am	10.30am

Special Delegate Conference may look and feel very different to what we are used to, but the NEC feels that it is important to give our members and activists a platform to discuss the issues the union faces and use our democratic processes to shape how we work in the future.

The pandemic continues to place significant pressure on our branches and activists and in these unprecedented circumstances it is understandable that attendance at the SDC may be affected.

After the deadline for branch registration has passed, an assessment will need to be made. If the quorum and/or our rule book obligations on proportionality and fair representation are unlikely to be met, the NEC, in consultation with our regions reserves the right to postpone the event until such time we can comply with these obligations.

This is a one-off UNISON Special Conference and sets no precedence for future conferences.

Timetable

Deadline for Submission of Motions	12.00 noon	Thursday 8 April 2021
Publication of Preliminary Agenda		w/c Tuesday 20 April 2021
Deadline for Submission of Delegates	5.00pm	Thursday 6 May 2021
Deadline for reasonable adjustment requests for access	5.00pm	Thursday 6 May 2021
Deadline for Submission of Amendments	12.00 noon	Monday 10 May 2021
Deadline for Priorities	12.00 noon	Monday 10 May 2021
Deadline for Motion Appeals	12.00 noon	Monday 10 May 2021
Publication of Final Agenda		Tuesday 18 May 2021
Publication of Priorities		Tuesday 18 May 2021
Deadline for Amendments Appeal	12.00 noon	Monday 24 May 2021
Circulation of Draft Composites to relevant branches		Friday 28 May 2021
Deadline for Change of Delegate	5.00pm	Tuesday 1 June 2021
Deadline for agreement on Composites		Friday 4 June 2021
Publication of Composites		Wednesday 9 June 2021
Publication of Order of Business / SOC Report	9.00am	Wednesday 9 June 2021

Enclosed with this Conference Bulletin, and available for download on the conference webpage <https://www.unison.org.uk/vsdc2021> are:

Advice on Attendance to Special Delegate Conference 2021
 Advice on Themes for Motion Submission to Special Delegate Conference 2021
 Advice on OCS Motion Submission to Special Delegate Conference 2021
 Advice on National / Regional Representation
 NEC Guidance on Branch Representation

How to Attend Special Delegate Conference 2021

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the way we do business and UNISON is committed to supporting our democratic processes and give our members the opportunity to shape the future of our Union at Conference.

UNISON's Special Delegate Conference 2021 will be held online and may look and feel very different to what we have been used to.

Attendance will be virtual, and delegates should be submitted on the Online Conferencing System (OCS) in line with the normal rule-book requirements on Branch Representation. Motions will be debated on a virtual platform. Speakers will need to be identified and nominated in advance – please give some thought to who this may be. Further information on speakers will be sent to relevant branches when composites have been agreed.

No shared delegate options will be available for Special Delegate Conference 2021.

Once registration is closed, and before the event, all attendees will be sent on-line joining instructions. These will include a link to the sessions and a two-step password.

Please keep these details safe and confidential as they will be the only way to access the Special Delegate Conference. If these details are accessed by anyone else, they will invalidate your own access to conference

Themes for Special Delegate Conference 2021

Submitting motions for themed debates

In addition to the debate on Branch Resources Review there will be two themed debates - one on the impact of Covid and one on securing a decent post pandemic settlement across the UK.

Branches and other submitting bodies are asked to read the short descriptions of each of the themes before drafting and agreeing their motions.

1. The Branch Resources Review

In 2019 Conference in passing motion 126 set up not only a two year focussed review into Branch Resources but also a group of twenty four lay members from the NEC and Regions to conduct it. The review in general has been running since 2011 and Conference asked for a specific report back in 2021. The review group has been consulting widely and has made fourteen recommendations as a package of measures to support branch activists further.

The NEC, on behalf of the review group, will be bringing the report and the recommendations in the form of a motion to Conference for delegates to debate for such an inquiry.

2. The Impact of Covid 19 on UNISON members, public services and working life

This debate will provide an opportunity for delegates to share their experiences, reflect on lessons learned and set out evidence that can be submitted to a public inquiry into the pandemic.

This should focus on one or more of the following areas:

- i.the extent to which a decade of austerity had an impact on the ability of public services to respond to the crisis;
- ii.health and safety in the workplaces in the context of Covid – from the front line to home working. This can include vaccination policy and issues related to workplace testing;
- iii.the structural inequalities highlighted by the pandemic
- iv.the comparison of responses across the nations and regions;
- v.union resilience - how workplace organisation and the wider union held up;
- vi.the global impact of the pandemic, including access to PPE and medicines and IPR for vaccines.

Actions should relate to how the union takes forward the lessons learned, the campaign for a public inquiry and the terms of reference for such an inquiry.

3. Securing an equal and sustainable post pandemic settlement

This debate will provide an opportunity for delegates to set out what they think the priority post Covid campaigns are for UNISON, to ensure that there is no going back to the structural inequalities, underinvestment in public services and poor employment practices that resulted in the UK being amongst the very worst hit countries in terms of deaths and economic impact.

This should focus on one or more of the following areas:

- i. securing increased investment to improve all public services right across the UK;
- ii. the conditions necessary to secure improvements in pay;
- iii. decent and secure jobs across all sectors in which the union organises;
- iv. the key importance of public services and public service workers to stimulate and ensure a healthy economy
- v. measures needed to bring about a fair and equal society – domestically and internationally
- vi. the replacement of broken and fragmented social care provision with a new national care service;
- vii. the creations of a green and sustainable economy;
- viii. well organised workplaces, a fairer labour market and overhaul of employment and trade union rights.

Actions should focus on the policies that will achieve these outcomes, how the union campaigns in pursuit of them and how this will involve UNISON working together with allies in the labour and trade union movement domestically and internationally.

**There are NO paper forms for motion or delegation submission. You must use the Online Conference System (OCS) instead.
See next section for full information.**

Information on how to submit motions and delegations using UNISON's Online Conference System (OCS)

Which branch officers can use the OCS? Motions and delegations can be submitted at branch level by either the Branch Chair or Branch Secretary. The other will receive e-mail copies of the motion or delegation submission as soon as it is submitted. Branch employed staff are also able to enter motions but do not have authority to submit them on behalf of a branch.

At regional level, the regional secretary is authorised to submit the motion/delegation, with the regional convenors receiving an instant e-mail copy. This process is replicated at national level for national bodies and their relevant chairs and secretaries.

Which members can use the OCS? When a member is registered as a delegate to a conference, they will receive an e-mail informing them of this as long as their e-mail address is listed on the RMS. They can then also access the OCS to upload their photograph, to make online requests for services such as reasonable adjustments, crèche places and babysitting, which should be made by the deadline stated.

How will these people access the OCS? Users access the OCS via the UNISON website at www.unison.org.uk and clicking on 'My UNISON' - which is located at the top of the front page. Using your UNISON membership number and surname, register once and you will be issued with a password. For subsequent access, simply click on 'My UNISON' and then 'Sign-in now' and you will need your membership number and the password you were issued. Branch employed staff should call their regional contact.

What if the correct branch people have accessed 'My UNISON' but then cannot access the OCS? Key to accessing the OCS is ensuring that the data held on UNISON's membership system, the RMS, is correct. It records which members hold the key positions of Branch Secretary and Branch Chair. If this information is incorrect, or if it changes, the branch needs to ensure that the RMS records are updated immediately. Then the individual should call their regional contact.

What else needs to happen? It will help the system to function if these key branch people also have an e-mail address stored on their RMS records. Please contact your branch or regional RMS team urgently, to make this happen. Each delegate within a delegation should also have their date of birth stored on the RMS.

Delegates to Conference: It is important that we collect e-mail addresses for those members wishing to participate in any way in the conference. The e-mail address can be anyone that you have easy access to e.g. your personal e-mail, branch e-mail or that of a friend or relative.

- If you already have an e-mail address and access to the UNISON website, the quickest way to update your details is to go to the UNISON website and click 'My UNISON' – you will need your UNISON membership number.
- If you don't have an e-mail address or don't have access to the UNISON webpage, you can contact UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857 and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON Membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.
- Or, you can contact your local UNISON branch and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON membership records – you will need

your UNISON membership number.

Key contacts:

If you have a 'My UNISON' registration issue: UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857.

If you have an OCS issue, please contact your relevant regional contact. Listed below are the Conference contacts for each region, who can also assist with online conference registration:

Region	Contact	Tel	E-mail
Eastern	Amanda Tickner	01245 608909	a.tickner@unison.co.uk
East Midlands	Colleen Forrest (Tues & Fri only)	0115 847 5468	c.forrest@unison.co.uk
	Katrina Grace (Mon & Tues only)	0115 847 5417	k.grace@unison.co.uk
Greater London	Shelley Davey Lorraine Tant Cally Thompson	0207 535 6648	glrconference@unison.co.uk
Northern	Linda Smith	0191 245 0852	l.smith@unison.co.uk
	Allison Jackson	0191 245 0805	a.jackson2@unison.co.uk
Northern Ireland	Elizabeth Robinson	02890 270190	e.robinson@unison.co.uk
North West	Kim Scott	0161 661 6777	k.scott@unison.co.uk
	Gillian Gorman	0161 661 6743	g.gorman@unison.co.uk
Scotland	Rosaleen Rodgers	0141 342 2816	r.rodgers@unison.co.uk
	Jean Fraser	0141 342 2880	j.fraser@unison.co.uk
South East	Louise Barter	01483 406547	l.barter@unison.co.uk
	Kieran Pearson	01483 406510	k.pearson@unison.co.uk
South West	Jenn Gollings (Mon – Thurs only)	01823 285336	j.gollings@unison.co.uk
Cymru/Wales	Beverley Powell	02920 729475	b.powell@unison.co.uk
West Midlands	Claire Kenny	0121 685 3174	c.kenny@unison.co.uk
Yorkshire & Humberside	Laraine Senior	0113 218 2333	l.senior@unison.co.uk

National and Regional Representation

The following bodies are eligible to send two delegates (at least one of whom should be female) who shall be entitled to speak but not vote:

- Regional Councils
- National Self-Organised Groups
- Service Groups
- Private Contractors National Forum
- National Young Members' Forum
- National Retired Members' Committee

The following bodies are eligible to send one delegate only who shall be entitled to speak but not to vote:

- Regional Young Members' Forums
- Regional Retired Members' Committees

Branch Funding

Branches are expected to nominate delegates to attend Special Delegate Conference. This is reflected in the branch funding formula. If a branch does not send at least 50 per cent of its delegate entitlement to Conference and is not represented by at least 50 per cent of the delegate entitlement at conference sessions, then the branch's funding entitlement will be reduced by 2.5 per cent, so you are encouraged to send your full delegation.

If your branch, for whatever reason, cannot send delegates to Conference, you should notify your regional office as soon as possible of the reasons why. Depending on the branch circumstances the region will be able to provide guidance on how attendance at Conference can be achieved.

Disenfranchised Branches

Branches are reminded that under Rule D.1.3.3.1 you will be disenfranchised from sending delegates to attend Special Delegate Conference and Service Group Conferences for the remainder of the financial year following the year to which the financial return applies, if you did not submit your annual financial returns (Rule G.10.1) to your UNISON regional office by no later than **15 March each year**.

Branch Representation

This will be in accordance with the Scheme of Branch Representation drawn up under Rule D.1.3, attached. **Please read the guidelines attached to the Scheme as they provide clear information on how the scheme is interpreted, in particular in relation to sharers, low paid female delegates and young members.** Representation is based on membership at **30 September 2020**. Regions will monitor the list of delegates submitted by branches to ensure compliance with the scheme.

Transgender Members

UNISON applies strict rules on proportionality in branch conference delegations, to ensure proper representation of women. Members who are in the process of transitioning gender may not yet have changed their UNISON membership details. For example, a member may wish to attend Special Delegate Conference as a woman, but still be attending work as a man. Members will be registered for Special Delegate Conference as the gender in which they will attend the Conference, irrespective of their gender recorded on the RMS.

To ensure that branch delegations including transgender members are not rejected on grounds of proportionality, please contact the Conference Office on 020 7121 5123 with information on any online delegate submissions which include members attending conference in a different gender to that recorded on the RMS. Their confidentiality will be respected at conference.

Monitoring for Fair Representation and Proportionality

All delegates will be asked to complete an online form which enables the Conference to be monitored in order that UNISON can check on progress towards its objectives of fair representation and proportionality at all levels of the union. This exercise is conducted at all UNISON conferences and at regional level.

Please assist us by completing the online form before the end of conference.

Appeals

Any appeals concerning the composition of branch delegations shall be considered at regional level via a regional appeals panel convened by the regional secretary. Late delegate registrations will not be approved. There will be no exceptions to this. The appeals mechanism in the regions is for the composition of delegations, not for late submissions. Regions have to apply the deadlines strictly.

Fitness to Attend Conference

With the introduction of Fitness to Work sick notes are slightly different now. Members who are off sick from work may have an illness/condition which means they can't perform some tasks but can perform others. They may have a fitness to work certificate which means they return to work with certain caveats – e.g. places limits on the types of tasks they can perform at work and duration.

So if a member is not at work and off sick and wants to attend the Special Delegate Conference they need to ask for a note from their GP indicating they are fit to attend the conference (sitting for long periods). We also advise them to get a note from their employer agreeing to their attendance at conference, as this may be a different activity from those at work which they are not able to do.

Members should send a copy of the Fitness to Attend note to the UNISON Conference Office (via email) in advance of the conference. This information will be treated with confidentiality.

Please help us to help the environment

We're doing our best to reduce the environmental impact of our conferences. This year, we are providing all delegates with electronic documents **only**. All these documents will be available online on the UNISON website. You can then download them onto your laptop or tablet to view online while you are at conference.

Reasonable Adjustments

Speech-to Text and BSL Interpreters will be available for all main online conference sessions. Please request these in the normal way even though they will be already provided.

UNISON aims to provide a fully accessible event to disabled members in accordance with our duties under the Equality Act. Requests for reasonable adjustments must be submitted by **Thursday 6 May 2021 at 5.00pm**.

For any reasonable adjustments required, please complete the request online by the stated deadline. This can only be done by the registered delegate themselves. Authorisation for personal assistance/facilitation is required from your Branch Secretary that this expenditure will be approved.

While we work within the context of the social model of disability this does not mean that UNISON can automatically provide all resources that are requested as adjustments. We have to consider the finite resources available both in terms of space and finances in order that we can balance our commitment to the social model with the resources available, and channel them to where they are needed most.

The process for managing requests that we adopted at 2016 National Delegate Conference has shown that with better information from members we can better address individual needs, allocate resources fairly, retain the ability to respond flexibly at conference and reduce the impact on other members.

While not requesting detailed personal information, UNISON will require sufficient information in order to understand the barriers faced to get the right resources to the right people for this Conference. This will assist us in making adjustments that are meaningful and appropriate to the individual.

The union will determine the allocation of limited resources. If necessary, this may include reserving the right to seek additional information.

Change of Delegate

Branches may change delegates up to 2 weeks before the start of Conference. A member registering as a substitute branch delegate must have been eligible to represent the branch at the closing date for registration of delegates **Tuesday 1 June 2021 at 5.00pm**. Any changes must be in accordance with the Scheme of Branch Representation.

Advice on Submission of Motions

Please refer to the advice from the Standing Orders Committee about submission of motions, enclosed with this Conference Bulletin.

The Preliminary Agenda will be published on **Tuesday 20 April 2021**. The Final Agenda will be published online on **Tuesday 18 May 2021**. The Composite Motions, Order of Business and SOC Report will be published on **Wednesday 9 June 2021**

Data Protection

The information you provide via the OCS, in addition to your information held on UNISON's membership database, will be used for the organisation and administration of Conference. It may also be used for statistical purposes as this helps us plan future conferences. We will process your personal data in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). You can find out more about how UNISON processes your personal data by going to unison.org.uk/privacy-policy or emailing dataprotection@unison.co.uk.

UNISON Scheme of Branch Representation SDC 2021

INTRODUCTION

UNISON rules require the NEC to draw up a scheme for the composition of branch delegations to Special Delegate Conference.

The purpose of the scheme is to ensure that branch delegates are representative of the union's diverse membership and that delegations meet the requirements of proportionality and fair representation.

It is important that all groups of members are represented at Special Delegate Conference. Groups that have been consistently under-represented include low paid women, young, disabled, LGBT and Black members.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

1. Branches are entitled to one delegate per 1,000 members or part thereof.
2. If the delegation only comprises one full delegate, then this delegate may be of any gender.
3. The gender make up of the delegation is based on the proportion of women members in the branch, compared to members who are male or non-binary
4. Branches with over 2,000 members must include one low paid, female member in the delegation.
5. Branches with over 3,000 members must include one young member in the delegation (ie. Age 26 or under at end of conference).
- ~~6. Branches can send two people, in any gender combination, to share one of the delegate places. However:

 - a. ~~If the entire delegation entitlement comprises of just the two sharers, then at least one must be female.~~
 - b. ~~if they are sharing the low paid seat, both sharers must be low paid;~~
 - c. ~~if they are sharing the young members' seat, both sharers must be young members.~~*ie. Sending one sharer to meet either the low paid or young member requirement is not sufficient.*~~
7. Branches must include Black members in their delegation in proportion to the workforce profile of the employers covered by the branch.
8. Branches should endeavour to include disabled members and LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus) members in the delegation.
9. Overall, branches should also consider factors such as the balance between full time and part time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations and skills.

REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the terms of Rule D.1.3, regional committees have the responsibility for implementing this scheme and applying the NEC agreed criteria within their region. Therefore regions are required to monitor the registration process to ensure branch delegations meet the requirements of the scheme.

APPEALS

Branches have a right of appeal against a decision by their region that their proposed branch delegation is not in line with this scheme. Regions are therefore asked to make early arrangements for an appropriate lay member body to hear appeals.

When considering appeals, regions must satisfy themselves that branches are providing clear, documented evidence that they cannot meet the categories of membership. For example, where branches state that they have no low paid women members, consideration must be given to the profile of the overall workforce(s) covered by that branch. Regions are also asked to consider what steps branches bringing appeals have taken to ensure their delegations meet the requirements of the scheme.

DETAIL OF REQUIREMENTS

This section provides further detail about the requirements of the scheme of branch representation, as summarised on page 1.

SIZE OF BRANCH DELEGATIONS (Rule D.1.3.1 and D.1.3.2)

Representation is on the basis of one delegate per 1,000 members or part thereof at 30 September 2020.

For example a branch with 4,300 members is entitled to 5 delegates.

SINGLE DELEGATE BRANCHES

If the delegation only comprises one full delegate, then this delegate may be of any gender.

PROPORTIONALITY (Rule D.2.12.2)

UNISON's proportionality rules mean that the total branch delegation, including any sharers, must be made up from the same proportion of women and men as there are in the membership of the branch.

For example if a branch has 70% women members, 70% of its delegate entitlement must be women delegates.

When calculating proportionality, each sharer counts as one delegate.

If a branch is unable to elect enough women delegates to meet proportionality, then the women's places on the delegation must remain unfilled. This is consistent with the approach to proportionality taken elsewhere in the union.

FAIR REPRESENTATION: LOW PAY (Rule D.2.12.3)

Branches with over 2,000 members, entitled to send delegations of three or more members, must include a low paid woman delegate.

Low paid members are those with a basic hourly rate of £10.63 or less [note this figure will be inflated where London Weighting applies].

Branches must be proactive in filling the low paid members' place. In identifying low paid members, branches should ensure they consider *all* employers and *all* workforces covered by the branch. The low paid woman delegate place may only be shared by two low paid women.

FAIR REPRESENTATION: YOUNG MEMBERS (Rule D1.5)

Branches with over 3,000 members, entitled to send delegations of four or more members, must include a young member (aged 26 or under at the end of the conference).

FAIR REPRESENTATION: BLACK MEMBERS (Rule D.2.12.3)

Branches must include Black members in their delegation in proportion to the workforce profile of the employers covered by their branch.

The NEC requires that all parts of the union include Black members within all UNISON activities. Branches and regions are urged to ensure that delegations include Black members in fair proportion to the workforce profile of the employers covered by the branch.

Regions have a responsibility to ensure that this requirement is applied consistently and to work with branches to identify the workforce profile of their employers.

FAIR REPRESENTATION: DISABLED MEMBERS AND LGBT+ MEMBERS

(Rule D.2.12.3)

Branches are asked to endeavour to include both disabled members and LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus) members in the delegation.

Branches should maintain these members' confidentiality as required.

Dear Colleague

SPECIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE 2021 – GUIDANCE

The past 12 months has been a year like no other. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a devastating loss of life, it has wrecked the economy and job prospects, it has damaged education and mental health. The crisis has also placed an unprecedented strain on our public services and the UNISON members that work so hard to keep them running. While it appears that we are finally past the worst, the virus is still with us and its impact will be long-lasting. Thousands of workers have been left exhausted and traumatised by the pandemic, and it will take years for key services to recover. We are also confronted by a Tory government at Westminster that prioritises pay freezes over long-term investment in our public services.

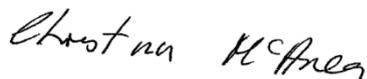
As your new General Secretary, I know just how hard UNISON branches have worked to support our members through the pandemic and what a strain this has placed on you. But it is also essential that, even in challenging times, there is an opportunity for branches to shape the decision-making of our union. It is not yet possible to hold a full physical National Delegate Conference, but this year we are striving to keep our union's proud democracy alive with a Special Delegate Conference and I encourage you all to take part.

Branches are encouraged to submit motions on three key themes for debate. We need to reflect on the experience of the pandemic – whether health and safety issues at work, the worrying inequalities exposed by Covid, or the impact of the crisis internationally. It is also essential that we set out an agenda for the future – one that supports our public services and values the workforce, with the pursuit of fairness and equality at its heart. And internally, the Conference provides an opportunity for us to debate the report of the Branch Resources Review.

The accompanying documents give more information on these themes and how to submit motions to the Special Delegate Conference.

Please take part and help shape our agenda.

Yours sincerely



CHRISTINA MCANEA
GENERAL SECRETARY