

## Liverpool ACC

30<sup>th</sup> October 2021 – 01 Nov 2021

---

### Covid-19

---

#### 1. Covid-19 and Black disabled workers – learning the lessons for the recovery

Conference notes that Black people were four times more likely to die of Covid-19 than white people while almost 60% of deaths were of disabled people.

The myth that Covid-19 doesn't discriminate has been unmasked. Black and disabled people were hit the hardest and we continue to be disproportionately impacted as we hopefully come out of the pandemic. 'Long Covid' has impacted upon existing conditions and triggered new conditions for many

Many Black workers were too low paid to qualify for statutory sick pay and continued to have to come to work when they needed to self-isolate. For much homeworking is a fanciful dream, whilst living at work is the daily reality.

Disabled people are already facing significantly higher levels of redundancy than non-disabled people and the disability pay gap has worsened since the pandemic started.

The homeworking revolution that many of us have enjoyed has by-passed those Black workers who are more likely to work in low paid, front line and zero hours jobs, with no access to redeployment to jobs that could be done from home.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee, in liaison with the National Black Members Committee, to:

1. Work with the service groups to support negotiation with employers to include front line workers in homeworking policies, with redeployment an option for those who want it
2. Campaign for an increase in the level and extent of sick pay so that low paid Black disabled workers don't disproportionately lose out
3. Work with the NEC and the Labour Link to develop a broad-based campaigning and bargaining response to learn the lessons of the impact of Covid-19 on Black disabled workers.

***National Black Members' Caucus***

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

#### 2. A Covid-19 secure world for Disabled Members

Conference is concerned that 60% of all people who have died from Covid-19 were disabled and nearly half a million people have had Long Covid for over a year, yet the government have not issued any guidance on supporting disabled people at risk of Covid-19 once restrictions have ended.

So called Freedom Day could almost have been termed as Imprisonment Day for some Disabled Members who were left feeling more vulnerable than ever as the government removed all legislation relating to Covid-19 secure workplaces, transport and public places.

Conference, Long Covid can be a debilitating condition that can cause chronic fatigue, breathing problems, anxiety, depression, brain fog, muscle weakness and severe pain, which can impact on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Yet so far there has been no recognition from government that Long Covid could in some cases be classed as a disability.

When restrictions ended so did the requirement for employers to make workplaces Covid-19 secure and the government withdrew work at home rules leaving Disabled Members with no legal route to challenge employers who insist they return to unsafe workplaces.

The failure to continue to enforce the use of face coverings on public transport, in shops and in other service settings has left Disabled Members feeling increasingly vulnerable and at risk of contracting the virus. Many have resorted to staying at home and almost a return to shielding.

While Test and Trace had many faults, it could at least inform people if they had visited a place where someone had tested positive, but by scrapping the requirement to check into venues the government has eliminated even the most basic functionality of the app.

Conference Covid-19 has not disappeared. It is not something Disabled Members can simply learn to live with if there are no protections in place. Leaving decisions to employers, service providers and the wider public does not provide any reassurance to Disabled Members who are feeling increasingly vulnerable.

Conference is calling on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National Executive Committee, Service Group Executives, Labour Link, the TUC and other bodies they believe appropriate to:

1. Campaign for Long Covid to be recognised as a disability.
2. Write to the Prime Minister and other appropriate government Ministers to lobby for the introduction of statutory guidance to ensure workplaces, public transport and other public places are Covid-19 secure including recognising the need for Covid-19 related reasonable adjustments.
3. Produce guidance for Branches to use when negotiating Covid-19 secure workplaces and Covid-19 policies including specific reference to the issues faced by Disabled Members and Members with Long Covid.

**Northern Region**

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT with qualifications*

## 2.1

After the third paragraph insert a new paragraph as follows:

“The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative impact on their ability to do normal day to day activities, but some employers don’t understand that this could apply to Long Covid. Some Disabled Members have been told they must wait 12 months to have any rights or that Long Covid can’t be a disability because too many people have it. The case law and guidance is clear. Long-term can mean the effect has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more and that it is the effect of the condition on the individual not the number of people who have it that needs to be considered.”

Delete point 1 and replace with a new point 1 that reads:

“Campaign for the government and employers to recognise that people with Long Covid can be defined as disabled under the Equality Act if the condition has a substantial impact on their ability to do normal day to day activities that is expected to last 12 months or more.”

***National Disabled Members Committee***

## 2.2

At end of fifth paragraph insert “Disabled women often feel more vulnerable on public transport and this is exacerbated by the fear of being challenged or abused for not wearing a mask even when exempt.”

***National Women Members’ Caucus***

## 2.3

At the end of the fifth paragraph insert:

“However, there are many disabled people who are exempt from wearing a face mask, whether because it exacerbates an existing condition, such as asthma or anxiety, or where they are British Sign Language (BSL) users who rely on facial expressions and may also lip read. Some Deaf members have reported being abused when they don’t wear a mask. It is important that a balanced approach is achieved so that those who are exempt from mask wearing are not discriminated against.”

At the end of action point 2 insert “and for clear communication from government about exemptions from mask wearing for some disabled people”.

***National Deaf Members’ Caucus***

## 2.4

Insert new paragraph after existing paragraph seven

Conference notes the potential to create a two-tier Covid society for disabled people, compounding the exclusions we already experience, through the introduction of

'passports' or 'certificates' to travel more freely or to gain access to larger events and venues.

Insert new action point four

Highlight the potential inequalities the introduction of 'passports' or 'certificates' create for disabled people who for health reasons are unable to receive a Covid-19 vaccine and seek to ensure alternative provisions are developed for this group to enable the same Covid freedoms in movement or access as those able to receive a vaccine.

***Scotland Region***

---

### **3. Disabled Workers and Post-Covid-19 Syndrome**

Conference notes that as we move past more than a year since Covid-19 hit these nations, we can already see the devastating affects it has had on those impacted by Post-Covid-19 Syndrome.

Common symptoms of Post-Covid-19 Syndrome include (but are not limited to) fatigue, brain fog, shortness of breath, difficulty concentrating, pain and changes in mood. Symptoms can often be fluctuating which adds another layer of complexity in managing the condition both personally and within the workplace.

Conference notes that there is common ground with other Energy Limiting Chronic Illnesses. Looking at the common barriers this group of people face rather than the individual diagnoses will only strengthen the case for appropriate support and action.

While reasonable adjustments may be advised by Occupational Health or other health professionals, employers don't always agree to implement them or implement them in a timely manner. In addition to this, phased returns are historically very difficult as they're often rigid and do not allow enough flexibility to deal with the fluctuating nature of Post-Covid-19 Syndrome. It is vital that employers understand the importance of flexible and timely implementation of reasonable adjustments and the benefits to both employer and worker.

Conference is aware that many of our members are facing employers who use punitive measures such as formal sickness absence hearings, capability procedures and even dismissal rather than offer people the support they need. UNISON has produced new guidance to help branches to support members with Post Covid-19 syndrome, including looking at whether the member may be a disabled person and entitled to protections and adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. However more needs to be done to raise awareness with employers of their duties and responsibilities when it comes to supporting staff with Post-Covid-19 Syndrome.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee, working with other parts of the union where appropriate, to:

1. Continue to produce guidance and training to help branches prevent members being penalised for having Post-Covid-19 Syndrome.

2. Work with the TUC Disabled Workers Committee to put additional pressure on government to support people with Long Covid
3. Lobby government for explicit timescales on responding to and implementing reasonable adjustments to be incorporated into legislation
4. Promote the current range of resources available to support our regions and branches, including:
  - Quick guide to Reasonable Adjustment,
  - Reasonable Adjustments Passport and policy guide
  - Disability Leave bargaining guide and model Policy
  - Bargaining to support those with Long Covid guide
5. Learn from the experiences of those with Energy Limiting

Chronic Illnesses, including the challenges of supporting staff at work and preventing punitive processes and ultimately capability dismissal, when there is still a lack of knowledge and recognition for the condition by employers, the medical profession and even broader society.

***National Disabled Members Committee***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

### 3.1

In the fifth paragraph after “the support they need.” Insert “Black workers with post-Covid 19 syndrome are often particularly subject to such punitive measures and misuse of the sickness absence and performance management system due to systemic racism.”

At the end of action point one insert “with reference to the intersectional experience of Black disabled workers”.

***National Black Members’ Caucus***

---

## **4. Mental health: a trade union issue**

Conference notes the huge impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health, whether on staff working under stressful conditions, people isolated from friends and family by lockdown measures, the physical impact of the virus itself, and the continuing uncertainty due to changing and unreliable government advice and public health policies.

Conferences notes that many disabled members have come under intense pressure over the last year, whether because they have experienced isolation as a result of ‘shielding’ measures, have struggled to access reasonable adjustments, or were expected to attend or return to workplaces where they did not feel safe.

Conference notes that the UNISON Equality Survey in August 2020 found that 72% of disabled members said their mental health had been ‘seriously affected by lockdown’ or ‘slightly affected by lockdown’.

Conference recognises that mental health is a workplace issue which must be addressed by trade unions, both in negotiations with employers and by direct support for affected workers.

Conference asks the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Promote UNISON’s updated bargaining advice on mental health.
2. Support disabled members groups in working with their branches to negotiate positive workplace policies addressing and supporting staff mental health.
3. Share examples of best practice and successes in negotiating supportive policies and procedures such as sickness absence policies and policies on reasonable adjustments.
4. Encourage and support disabled members to become health and safety representatives, and promote UNISON’s Be on the Safe Side campaign to disabled members groups.
5. Work with the National Young Members Forum to promote UNISON’s campaigning and bargaining work around mental health to young disabled members.

***National Young Members’ Forum***

***National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT***

4.1

At the end of the third paragraph insert “Some disabled members with mental health problems have found themselves pursued through the absence management and performance management procedure. This is often particularly the case for Black disabled workers who are disproportionately targeted through disciplinary and related procedures.”

Insert new fourth paragraph as follows: “Many Black communities are reluctant to talk about mental health due to stigma and a justified fear of mental health services that disproportionately detain Black people against their will as a result of mental ill health. Conference notes that UNISON responded to the government’s recent white paper in support of changes that would reform the Mental Health Act to reduce the incidence of involuntary detention.”

Insert new final action point as follows: “Consider surveying disabled members on their experience of mental health in the workplace, including any disproportionate impact on Black disabled workers.”

***National Black Members’ Caucus***

---

## **5. Mental Health and Suicide Awareness to Support Disabled LGBT+ members following the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Conference applauds the National Disabled Members Committee for the work undertaken to date to highlight the effects of austerity measures on disabled lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender plus (LGBT+) workers, the services we provide and the knock-on effects of the reduction in those services.

Conference further notes that a range of governmental bodies, statutory services and civil society organisations have highlighted evidence that LGBT+ people experience increased levels of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress leading to suicidal ideation and action as a result of the negative impact of their experiences of discrimination and marginalisation both in the workplace and in wider society.

Covid-19 has had a particular impact and disabled LGBT+ people in particular are identified as an “at risk” group. LGBT Foundation 2020 Hidden Figures report and Stonewall LGBT in Britain 2018 found:

- 48% of disabled LGBT people identified the need for mental health support in May 2020
- 69% of disabled LGBT people said that they would rather receive support during this time from an LGBT organisation.
- Three in five LGBT disabled people (59%) have felt life was not worth living at some point in the last year, compared to three in ten LGBT (30%) people who aren't disabled

Additional available data on suicide and self-harm among disabled LGBT+ is stark and highlights the need for local and national suicide prevention strategies that consider LGBT+ issues in their approaches. NHS Trusts are starting to realise the importance of suicide awareness and are beginning to make training mandatory for staff so they can spot the signs that someone may be heading towards crisis point.

With a decade of government austerity leading to cuts to health, welfare and support services, our disabled LGBT+ members are more regularly experiencing mental health problems or finding it difficult to access support, and it is therefore important that reps can signpost members to agencies that can give them the help they need.

A number of charities and organisations such as Chasing the Stigma, PAPYRUS, MIND and The Samaritans are doing important work to tackle mental health and suicide stigma and encourage additional support for those falling under intersectional categories with poor mental health. It is important that the union supports and promotes organisations which are in line with its values.

It is also important that reps use UNISON's Bargaining on Mental Health Policies guide (which has been updated to acknowledge the impact of Covid-19) to work with the employer to ensure there is sufficient support for staff experiencing mental health problems. All policies, from sickness absence to reorganisation, should be audited to check where they can offer better support. Mental health problems may well mean

that the member is protected as a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010 and there should be clear policies around the need to identify and provide reasonable adjustments for such staff.

Conference therefore calls on the National Committee to work with the National LGBT+ committee to:

1. Continue to publicise UNISON's Bargaining for Mental Health policies guide
2. Work with 'There for You' to help branches and regions to signpost members towards suitable organisations and charities working in the field of mental health and suicide awareness
3. Work with service groups to promote and advocate training on mental health awareness and the potential risks of suicide both in the workplace and in our union
4. Consider the provision of materials for pride stalls and other equality events with information and signposting to support LGBT+ disabled people within the area of mental health and suicide awareness.

***Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

## **6. Stop the Covid-19 scams that prey on Deaf people**

Conference is concerned about the increase in scams during Covid-19 and particularly how this has impacted on Deaf people who are native British Sign Language (BSL) users.

Covid-19 scammers are criminals who use the publicity around coronavirus as a chance to target people. They try to take advantage of people's worries and uncertainty about the pandemic, especially those who are alone, self-isolating or in financial difficulty.

Covid scammers operate through fraudulent emails, phone calls, texts messages or social media posts and door-to-door visits. Many Deaf people are more vulnerable to these scams as written English is a second or other language and Deaf people also have barriers to communicating with strangers.

Coronavirus-related scams include:

- people claiming to be able to arrange a COVID-19 vaccine for a charge
- sales of fake products such as face masks or medical equipment which may be harmful or simply never arrive
- bogus healthcare workers who try to gain access to the home by claiming to offer testing for COVID-19
- people pretending to be from charities offering to do shopping
- emails and texts asking for donations to the NHS
- emails or texts pretending to be from the government

- emails offering life insurance against Covid-19.

Conference notes that over a decade of government cuts to public services has seen local council Trading Standards services decimated, with very little resources left to investigate scams.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Support appropriate campaigns to stop the Covid-19 scammers
2. Research and publicise the advice available from appropriate agencies
3. Raise this issue with branches and regions so that isolated Deaf members get the support they need
4. Work with the local government service group to campaign for increased funding for trading standards services.

***National Deaf Members' Caucus***

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT with qualifications*

---

## **7. Returning to the workplace after COVID-19**

Conference notes that with the easing of restrictions, members are now being asked to return to the workplace, but this can cause additional stress and anxiety for workers with disabilities.

Working from home can be an isolating experience. People with disabilities are more likely to feel isolated due to the lack of communication in accessible manners and issues of obtaining reasonable adjustments for the necessary equipment to carry out work from home.

With the return to work, there is a need for employers to work with employees and obtain a full understanding of the issues people with disabilities are facing. Conference notes that some disabled people have had to collect adjustments from their workplaces such as chairs, monitors, desks etc. which require returning to the workplace, and this adds additional difficulties, such as transportation of equipment. Many employers show a lack of empathy for disability issues.

This conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Undertake a survey of members to understand the extent of the issue's members are facing when returning to the workplace.
2. Develop a set of guidelines for members detailing the steps they can take to ensure they have the appropriate equipment for working from home, and for returning to the workplace.
3. To work with employers to understand the Access to Work process to ensure members are correctly assessed for necessary equipment to undertake the role.

4. To produce a guidance document to reduce the fear and stigma attached of the costs of reasonable adjustments and to what extent the costs of adjustments can be considered in the process of obtaining adjustments.

**Yorkshire & Humberside Region**  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

7.1

Insert new fourth paragraph: “Conference further notes that as a result of changes due to COVID, some disabled workers have felt forced to disclose to their employer that they are disabled and that this has led to some fearing discrimination, particularly for Black disabled workers who already face racism in the workplace.”

**National Black Members’ Caucus**

---

## **8. Covid-19 and Disability Inclusion in the Workplace**

With one in five employees being disabled it’s important that employers make our workplaces inclusive. Failure to make reasonable adjustments may amount to disability discrimination.

Conference is aware that there can be particular benefits to disabled people from working from home; however, this is an individual assessment and decision rather than a blanket policy approach.

There is an anticipation, that the employer’s response may simply be that disabled people work from home to save the need to make workplace adjustments; particularly for those in the ‘shielding’ category. This is regressive step, akin to attitudes towards disability under a Medical Model of Disability, that diminishes workplace accessibility. It reinforces a view that disabled workers ‘are the problem’ and has the potential to create an underclass of disabled worker among those shielding.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members’ Committee:

1. To monitor developments in relation to post-Covid-19 home working arrangements.
2. To continue promoting the Social Model of Disability.
3. To continue to support working from home as a reasonable adjustment.
4. To vociferously commend approaches that promote a right to work from home for disabled people rather than a requirement.

**South Lanarkshire UNISON Local Government Branch**  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

## 9. Covid-19: Personal Protective Equipment and Disabled Workers

This conference acknowledges that during the Covid-19 health pandemic we have had to wear Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] such as face masks and gloves when going about our day to day lives, and also in the workplace. For staff in certain roles there are more vigorous PPE requirements.

This has helped to keep us and others safe, preventing ill-health and even death. As we move forward into the “new normal” with increased emphasis on hygiene then it’s likely we will continue to wear PPE, however not everyone can wear and use it.

For example, around one in every 1,000 people living in the UK have a latex allergy. Latex is found in many healthcare products including PPE. There are other hazards and challenges around PPE, for example, the restricted ability – or inability – to lip read, or the use of hand sanitisers that could contain nuts and alcohol which are also common allergens.

As society opens up, we need to ensure that people health problems or disabilities affected by the use of PPE are not worsened.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee:

1. To work with UNISON’s National Health and Safety Committee to review UNISON guidance on PPE within the workplace ensuring it considers the impact of health conditions on the ability to wear or use the equipment.
2. To raise awareness of the issue through sharing stories about the physical and mental health impacts of wearing PPE as a result of an existing health condition or disability.
3. To seek alternative solutions such as clear face coverings, greater range of sizes of PPE to allow better fitting, and easier to use PPE that reduces restrictions for those with health condition or disability.

### **Scotland Region**

#### *National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

##### 9.1

Insert new fourth paragraph: “Conference further notes the results of UNISON’s summer 2020 survey of Black workers which found that many were given ill-fitting PPE which was based on the average body size of a white European. For example, some workers complained that face masks were made for bigger faces and were therefore unsafe. Low paid Black workers and those in precarious or zero hours jobs also struggled to access PPE of any sort during the pandemic.”

At the end of the existing fourth paragraph insert: “and that Black disabled people have equal access to safe PPE which fits.”

At the end of action point one insert “and the need for PPE that is made to fit people of all races and is equally available to those in precarious and zero hours work.”

## **10. Best practice for holding hybrid meetings**

Conference notes that Covid-19 has had an unequal impact on disabled people. Statistics show that 6 out of 10 people who have died from Covid-19 are disabled. There is a clear need to protect disabled people from exposure of the virus and the Health and Safety of workers should be a priority for employers.

With the easing of lockdowns and restrictions, conference notes the need for the promotion of hybrid meetings. Expectations on how people fulfil their roles and reconcile work and domestic responsibilities has changed dramatically over the last 18 months and it is important that employers do not rush people to return to the office, especially disabled people who have a much greater risk of death upon exposure to the virus. Employers have a duty of care to ensure that workplaces are safe to return to and employers should listen to concerns from their employees. As a result of this, employers must adapt and embrace hybrid meetings to accommodate everyone safely and maintain flexibility for disabled workers.

This conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Promote the use of hybrid meetings as a reasonable adjustment whilst stressing that remote access is not an alternative to accessible venues, personal assistance, mobility support or other independent living support that enable disabled people to travel and participate in face-to-face meetings.
2. Produce best practice guidance on how to hold a hybrid meeting to ensure inclusion for all attendees.
3. Produce guidance documentation on how disabled people can break down barriers and approach their organisations for the introduction of hybrid meetings as a reasonable adjustment.

***Yorkshire & Humberside Region***

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

10.1

Insert new third paragraph as follows: "Women still undertake the majority of care for children and older people in our society. Hybrid meetings reduce the need to travel – which can often be unsafe – and can allow greater inclusion and opportunities for women to participate."

***National Women Members' Caucus***

---

## **Recruitment & Organising**

---

### **11. Recruiting, supporting and developing young disabled activists**

This Conference notes that recruitment of young members to UNISON continues to increase year on year, with over 27,000 new young members joining UNISON in 2020.

This conference notes that young members continue, however, to be under-represented as UNISON stewards, representatives and officers.

Conference notes the survey of UNISON young members in November 2020 which found that 28% of young disabled members highlighted the issue of UNISON meetings being held in inaccessible locations. Young disabled members, LGBT+ members, women members and Black members were also more likely to be anxious about taking part in UNISON activities for the first time.

Conference believes that the full participation of young members is vital to the success of the union in developing a sustainable activist base for the future and making sure that the voices of young disabled workers are heard.

Conference asks the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young disabled activists and young people participating in disabled members groups.
2. Engage with branch and regional disabled members groups to identify barriers for young disabled members in getting more active in UNISON, and to highlight positive measures and success stories in addressing these barriers.
3. Encourage and support disabled members groups to develop mentoring and buddying schemes to support and encourage new young activists, including promoting UNISON's Learning and Organising Service's (LAOS) resources on mentoring.

***National Young Members' Forum***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

11.1

Insert new fourth paragraph:

“Young Deaf people who are native British Sign Language (BSL) users may face particular barriers to getting involved in their union. UNISON has produced a Stewards Guide to Representing Deaf (BSL) Members which can help branches to understand how they can best support young Deaf members into activism.”

At end of action point 2 insert “including publicising UNISON's Stewards Guide to Representing Deaf (BSL) Members”.

***National Deaf Members' Caucus***

11.2

Insert new fifth paragraph as follows: “Conference acknowledges that UNISON's culture of self-organisation is key to building and developing young activists organically and believes that branch self-organised structures should be actively encouraged and promoted. Mentoring can also be a positive way of supporting Black disabled people in overcoming barriers of racism and discrimination.”

## **Campaigning**

---

### **12. We need a British Sign Language Act now!**

Conference recalls that UNISON Disabled Members Conference 2018 passed the motion 'Legal Recognition of British Sign Language'. The motion explained that although the UK government formally recognised British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right in 2003, this did not give full legal status to BSL. Scotland is the only country in the UK to give BSL full legal status and to agree to promote its use. BSL still does not have full legal status in England and Wales and the same is true of BSL and Irish Sign Language (ISL) in Northern Ireland.

Since 2018, we have faced a global pandemic, and this has only made it clearer that there is a vital need to pass a BSL Act. Deaf people were left dangerously unprotected against Covid-19 when the UK prime minister's daily press conferences were not supported by a live BSL interpreter in the room. This contrasted starkly with Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish government broadcasts which had live BSL interpreters which meant that Deaf viewers could get the information straight away and in an understandable format.

Live BSL allows greater understanding of the importance and urgency of what is being said and does not leave it down to broadcasters whether to include BSL or not. But in England Deaf people had to rely on recorded BSL interpretation on some news channels or often incorrect information on social media.

Deaf people have had extremely limited information relating to the pandemic, and this has caused much distress and has, for many people, had a negative impact on their mental health.

Conference notes that UNISON responded to the parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee enquiry into the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on disabled people where we raised the issue of BSL interpreters at UK government press conferences and we called for a BSL Act to address the dangerously inadequate level of communication with Deaf people.

Conference strongly believes that all government information should be accessible to everyone, not just hearing people, and calls on the National Committee to raise awareness of this issue.

Deaf native BSL users are a distinctive linguistic group whose rights should be protected. Achieving a BSL Act would mean that BSL would be protected and promoted in a similar way to Welsh and Gaelic languages. Service providers would be required to produce information and support where appropriate in BSL, giving equal access to services for sign language users and removing many of the everyday barriers that they currently face, and which result in widespread discrimination.

A BSL Act could also mean that the UK government would need to provide a live BSL interpreter in the room for all government briefings, whether about a pandemic, severe weather or other national emergencies.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Campaign for a BSL Act for England, Wales and Northern Ireland that would achieve full legal recognition
2. Raise awareness of this issue with branches and regions
3. Consider ways UNISON can further contribute to this campaign.

***National Deaf Members' Caucus***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

### **13. Domestic Abuse – Lack of Support for Disabled Women**

Conference notes that an unfortunate and unwelcome result of the national lockdown has been a reported increase in domestic abuse and domestic violence. Often isolated and shut off from previous support networks, victims can struggle to access support or alert others to their situation. Perpetrators of domestic abuse have been able to use the restrictions to create real barriers and increase their control over their victims. With cutbacks on the support services, any services that may be able to help are even more restricted with being able to accommodate disabled women and their needs. For example, a safe house or women's refuge may not be fully accessible.

Disabled women suffering domestic abuse, whether from their partners, their children, carers or even family members, are trapped and isolated and fearful of the future.

Victims in these situations can find going to work a safe place and this could allow the victim the opportunity to raise the alarm. However, during lockdown a majority of people have been working from home and not going into the office. This is true for most vulnerable people, especially disabled women who may have been shielding. Conference is calling on employers to extend this safe place to disabled women working from home.

Among disabled women, 17.5% experienced domestic abuse from 2019-20, while the rate for disabled men was 9.2%. These figures have increased since the pandemic as calls to the UK's largest domestic abuse helpline are rising "week on week". More than 40,000 calls were made to the national domestic abuse helpline during the first three months of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Anybody who experiences domestic abuse may face broader risk factors, but disabled women face specific risks. They are often in particularly vulnerable circumstances that may reduce their ability to defend themselves, or to recognise, report and escape abuse. Impairment can create social isolation, which, along with the need for assistance with their health and care raises the risk of domestic abuse for disabled women.

Physical and environment inaccessibility, stigma and discrimination can also exclude and isolate them. Their reliance on care increases the situational vulnerability to other people's controlling behaviour and can exacerbate difficulties in leaving an abusive situation especially if any benefits they received are controlled by the perpetrator.

Not only do disabled women experience higher rates of domestic abuse, they also experience more barriers to accessing support, such as health and social care services and domestic abuse services.

Conference welcomes the 'Ask for ANI' (Assistance Needed Immediately) initiative that is being rolled out across all four countries of the UK in community pharmacies. The initiative is a codeword scheme that allows those who are experiencing violence in the home to discreetly ask for help in contacting the police and other services. However, Women's Aid has reported concerns that the scheme may not be accessible to all marginalised groups for example, disabled women who may not be able to access a pharmacy.

The Domestic Abuse Act was given royal assent and became law on 29 April, after years of campaigning from survivors, charities and unions, including UNISON. For the first time in history, there is now a wide-ranging legal definition of domestic abuse, going beyond physical violence to include emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour, and economic abuse.

Abuse protection orders will also extend their coverage to victims' workplaces to make sure victims stay safe at work and will also cover other places where a victim may regularly be found, such as their place of worship or any children's school.

In order to take this work forward, conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee, working with the National Women's Committee, to:

- 1) Continue to promote UNISON guidance and other resources relating to domestic abuse through social media, bulletins to activists and members, and other media including highlighting the support 'There for You' can offer.
- 2) Regularly update our domestic abuse guide and model policy to include consideration of those who work from home, such as disabled workers.
- 3) Campaign to make women's refuge housing fully accessible, including barrier-free access to sleeping rooms and common areas, architectural features that comply with regulations, visual and auditory alarm systems and provision for assistance dogs.
- 4) Work with branches to identify employers that have adopted domestic abuse policies and highlight best practise as well as use information to promote benefits of doing so to other employers.

***National Women Members' Caucus***

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

13.1

At the end of the second paragraph insert: "Black disabled women face added issues around fear of involving the police and other services due to often justified fears of institutional racism. They may also face barriers to disclosing the abuse in their community."

***National Black Members' Caucus***

13.2

At end of first paragraph insert: “This is compounded further for disabled trans women due to increased hostility to the provision of support from some quarters and anti-trans groups.”

At end of second paragraph insert: “Using a person’s gender, gender identity or sexual orientation as a basis for threats, intimidation or harm, including threats to disclose gender history, sexual orientation or HIV status, only serves to compound and entrench the abuse further.”

In the 11th paragraph, after “National Women’s Committee” insert “and the National LGBT+ Committee”.

Insert new action point 2: “Highlight the increased isolation and vulnerability that intersectionality can bring in domestic abuse” and renumber the remaining points.

### ***Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus***

---

## **14. Domestic Abuse - Lack of Support for Disabled Women**

Conference notes that an unfortunate and unwelcome result of the national lockdowns during Covid-19 was a reported increase in domestic abuse and domestic violence. Often isolated and shut off from previous support networks, victims can struggle to access support or alert others to their situation. Perpetrators of domestic abuse have been able to use the restrictions to create real barriers and increase their control over their victims. With cutbacks on the support services, any services that may be able to help are even more restricted with being able to accommodate disabled women and their needs. For example, a safe house/women’s refuge, may not be fully accessible.

Disabled women suffering domestic abuse whether from their partners, their children, carers or even family members are trapped and isolated and fearful of the future.

Victims in these situations found attending work gave them a safe place and this could allow the victim the opportunity to raise the alarm. However, during lockdowns, a majority of people were working from home and not going into the office. This is true for most vulnerable people especially the disabled women who may have been shielding. UNISON is calling on employers to extend this safe place, to disabled women working from home.

Among disabled women, 17.5% experienced domestic abuse from 2019-20, while the rate for disabled men was 9.2%. These figures have increased since the pandemic as Calls to the UK’s largest domestic abuse helpline are rising “week on week”. More than 40,000 calls were made to the National domestic abuse helpline during the first 3 months of the Covid-19 restrictions.

Anybody who experiences domestic abuse may face broader risk factors, but disabled women face specific risks. They are often in particularly vulnerable circumstances that may reduce their ability to defend themselves, or to recognise, report and escape

abuse. Impairment can create social isolation, which, along with the need for assistance with their health and care raises the risk of domestic abuse for disabled women.

Physical and environment inaccessibility, stigma and discrimination can also exclude and isolate them. Their reliance on care increases the situational vulnerability to other people's controlling behaviour and can exacerbate difficulties in leaving an abusive situation especially if any benefits they received are controlled by the perpetrator.

Not only do disabled women experience higher rates of domestic abuse, they also experience more barriers to accessing support, such as health and social care services and domestic abuse services.

Conference welcomes the 'Ask for ANI' (Assistance Needed Immediately) initiative that is being rolled out across the UK in pharmacies. The initiative is a codeword scheme that allows victims to discreetly ask for help in contacting the police and other services. However, Women's aid has reported concerns that the scheme may not be accessible to all marginalised groups for example, disabled women, who may not be able to access a pharmacy.

The Domestic Abuse Bill was given royal assent and became law on 29 April, after years of campaigning from survivors, charities and unions, including UNISON. For the first time in history, there is now a wide-ranging legal definition of domestic abuse, going beyond physical violence to include emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour, and economic abuse.

Abuse protection orders will also extend their coverage to victims' workplaces to make sure victims stay safe at work and will also cover other places where a victim may regularly be found, such as their place of worship or any children's school.

In order to take this work forwards, conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National Disabled Women's Network to:

1. Continue to promote UNISON Guidance and other resources through social media, bulletins to activists and members, and other media including highlighting the support 'There for You' can offer.
2. An updated guide and model policy to include consideration of those who work from home, such as disabled workers.
3. Campaign to make women's refuge housing fully accessible, including barrier-free access to sleeping rooms and common areas, architectural features that comply with regulations, visual and auditory alarm systems.
4. Work with branches to identify employers that have adopted domestic abuse policies and highlight best practise as well as use information to promote benefits of doing so to other employers.

## **15. Deaf workers, Access to Work and PIP**

Conference notes that Deaf workers rely on Access to Work to pay for British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters so that they can do their jobs and live independent lives. However, during the pandemic, the Access to Work system wasn't as flexible or responsive as it needed to be in the changed circumstances. Long standing issues with the system were also more obvious.

Deaf workers were faced with an inflexible paper-based system which saw 'wet' signatures required from managers and interpreters. Some Deaf members had to go back and forth to the post office to send invoices off for signing and then send them back to the Department for Work and Pensions – in the middle of lockdown. Although Access to Work say they will allow electronic signatures on request, it is not the default and people have to fight for it.

Access to Work caps the annual amount a work can claim, and this disproportionately impacts Deaf workers.

Personal Independence Payments (PIP) also continue to be an issue for Deaf members who are often unfairly turned down for support that can help them to retain their job. This is also the case for other disabled members including those with fluctuating conditions like Multiple Sclerosis which the PIP system fails to understand.

Conference notes that social security is a devolved matter in Scotland and that the Scottish government is introducing a replacement for PIP called Adult Disability Payment from 2022. Although the system will take time to assess, UNISON Scotland responded positively to the consultation before it was agreed. We welcomed the commitment to bringing the service back into the public sector and making it a more tailored service that is responsive to individual disabled people's needs.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Lobby the Department of Work and Pensions for the option of a fully electronic Access to Work application and claim process
2. Campaign against the cap on Access to Work
3. Work with UNISON Scotland to closely watch the roll out of the Scottish Disability Payment scheme to see if there are lessons to be learned for the rest of the UK

***National Deaf Members' Caucus***

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

## **16. What are they (still) hiding? Black disabled people and PIP**

Conference recalls the 2019 Disabled Members Conference agreed the motion "What are they hiding? Missing PIP data on the experience of Black disabled people". The motion asked the national disabled members committee to seek data on the percentage of Black claimants turned down for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) compared to white claimants.

Conference notes that in response to requests from UNISON, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) confirmed that they do not have any data on the proportion of PIP refusals by race. This is because they do not routinely ask for ethnicity data from PIP claimants.

Conference believes that the DWP are failing to abide by the public sector equality duty (PSED) if they do not collect ethnicity data as they cannot therefore guard against a potential disproportionate impact on Black disabled people.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National Black Members Committee to:

- 1) Lobby for ethnicity monitoring of PIP claimants so that the proportionality of DWP's decision making and its duties under the PSED can be assessed
- 2) Raise this issue with the Labour Party, via the Labour Link, and with other organisations working on welfare benefits with the aim of provoking a broader campaign on this issue
- 3) Continue to campaign for a fairer system of publicly delivered PIP which acknowledges fluctuating conditions, puts the needs of disabled people at its heart and does not penalise people who are in work.

***National Black Members' Caucus***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

## **17. Protecting and Promoting Equality and Equity Employment Opportunity of People with Autism and with Severe or Specific Learning Impairments**

This conference commends work ongoing in Scotland to protect and promote the rights of people with Autism and with Learning Impairments. This includes the Our Voice Our Rights Campaign, led by the organisations ENABLE Scotland, the National Autistic Society Scotland, and Scottish Autism, to make Scotland the first place in the world to have an Autism and Learning Disability Commissioner to protect and promote their rights. So far this has led to manifesto commitments from four of the five parties that are represented in the Scottish Parliament including the Scottish National Party, and Labour.

Conference knows that disabled people face many inequalities in their lives, including employment. In a 2020 Office of National Statistics publication, "Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2020", it was reported that 81.3% of non-disabled people of working age are in employment, reducing to 52% among disabled people.

However, there is great disparity in employment among disabled workers based on the type of disability, and the disability employment gap is greatest among those with Autism or Severe or specific learning impairments at 21.7%, and 26.5% respectively.

In March 2020 Jane Harris of the National Autistic Society observed that autistic people were being let down by a lack of employment support. In November 2020, a survey of managers by the Institute of Leadership & Management noted 50% of

managers held a bias to recruiting a neurodivergent job applicant, with 26% of respondents saying they felt uncomfortable employing an applicant with Autism.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members' Committee:

1. To commend the work of the Our Voice Our Rights campaign in Scotland and the concept of establishing a commissioner for autistic people and people with a learning impairment.
2. To share the good work ongoing in Scotland to establish an Autism and Learning Disability Commissioner and lobby to establish similar roles across devolved nations in the UK.
3. To raise awareness of the inequalities and inequity facing autistic people and those with severe or specific learning impairments and provide best practice guidance to branches on supporting these groups gain and maintain meaningful employment opportunity.

### **Scotland Region**

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

17.1

In the second paragraph, after the first sentence insert "Because the diagnostic models are based on white males, both women and Black people are often diagnosed late and miss out on support – with Black boys with autism often dismissed as 'naughty kids'".

---

### ***National Black Members' Caucus***

## **18. Failure to engage won't silence Disabled Members**

Conference is concerned to hear that a forum established by Justin Tomlinson, the Minister for Disabled People, to 'bring the voices and expertise of disabled people into the heart of government policy making' appears to have been shut down amid concerns that the government will launch their long-awaited Disability Strategy without any meaningful consultation with disabled people.

And this isn't the only example of the government failing to meet their UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obligation to engage with disabled people.

A Disability Unit consultation on the Disability Strategy has been condemned as disrespectful as all but four of the questions were multiple choice included a question that asked non-disabled people if they would be happy to have a physical relationship with a disabled person. The government are now facing legal action after claims that the survey didn't give disabled people the chance to say what they felt should be in the strategy.

Conference over the last decade disabled people's rights have been rolled back, our support has been eroded and we've been demonised by successive Tory governments.

During the pandemic the government ignored disabled people, implemented policies that discriminated against us and left us to fend for ourselves. Their failure to hear what we had to say cost lives.

Conference we can't allow this to continue. We can't let their inability to listen prevent us from speaking out, their lack of consultation to stop our voices being heard or their failure to engage to silence us.

With around 200,000 Disabled Members UNISON is one of, if not the, largest disabled people's organisation in the country, it is vital the government hear what we have got to say, and we must take steps to make them listen.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC and Labour Link to:

1. Launch a media campaign to highlight the failure of the government to engage with disabled people
2. Send a message of support for the action against the government's Disability Unit relating to the failure to engage
3. Write to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to request they carry out an investigation into the government's failure to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty

***National Disabled Members Committee***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

18.1

At end of the third paragraph insert "Deaf people who are native BSL (British Sign Language) users also found it difficult to respond to the survey and to ensure their experience was included".

***National Deaf Members' Caucus***

---

## **19. Review of the Equality Act**

Conference notes that the Equality Act 2010 has now been in place for over 10 years and despite both the House of Lords and the United Nations stating that it fails disabled people there are still no plans for a review.

Since its implementation the world has changed significantly with Covid-19 being just one major event that has impacted on the lives of our Disabled Members.

Since Brexit equality legislation that came from the European Union has been transferred into domestic law but there is no guarantee that this won't be repealed as the government review their position EU law.

Some sections of the Equality Act such as dual discrimination have never made it onto the statute books leaving some Disabled Members at increased risk of discrimination.

Other groups, such as carers, still have no legal rights or protection against discrimination under the Equality Act.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC and Labour Link to:

1. Campaign for a full independent review of the Equality Act 2010 which involves meaningful consultation with disabled people and considers whether there are other groups, such as carers, who need to be offered protection
2. Lobby for the parts of the Equality Bill that were never implemented to be revisited, reviewed and brought into law
3. Support the TUC campaign to fully implement all Equality Act provisions including the socio-economic duty, dual and multiple discrimination and the publication of impact assessments

***Northern Region***

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

19.1

At the end of the first paragraph insert “The government’s recent Disability Strategy, published on 31 July, is a very thin document made up of re-heated promises and very little additional funding – and crucially for workers, does not include a commitment to updating the Equality Act.”

In the second paragraph delete “its” and replace with “the Equality Act’s”.

At the end of the fourth paragraph insert “A recent government response to a consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace included mention of looking at protections against third party harassment in the workplace by customers, contractors and members of the public for example, but concrete steps have yet to be committed to and it seems unlikely this will happen any time soon. In the same consultation response, the government rejected calls to reintroduce the repealed power of Tribunals to make broader recommendations.”

At the end of paragraph 5 insert “except in relation to discrimination by association”.

In action point 1 insert “additional” before “protection”.

Insert new final action point “Campaign for the urgent introduction of protection against third party harassment in the workplace as a matter of urgency and for significant improvements in the government’s Disability Strategy, including a step change in the enforcement of the right to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act.”

***National Disabled Members Committee***

---

## **20. Campaigning for accessible environments**

Conference is concerned that the recent pandemic, poorly funded local authorities and the government's proposals to reform planning are combining to make hopes of better access for disabled people a distant dream.

As the country started to reopen after the first lockdown local councils were told to do whatever was needed to help kickstart the economy. While these changes may have helped businesses, they often made life increasingly difficult for disabled people trying to navigate their way around their local areas.

Seats that disabled people relied on to rest as they went about their daily lives were removed to make way for pavement cafes that blocked pavements. Disabled parking bays and bus stops were removed to create new pedestrian walkways or cycle lanes or even worse dangerous and outdated shared spaces.

While these measures were supposed to be temporary some councils are planning to make them permanent despite the devastating impact this has on disabled people's ability to access services or get to work.

The government's failure to reimburse councils for the cost of Covid-19 has left funding gaps that need be plugged. Many councils have resorted to introducing parking charges for blue badge holders, reducing non-statutory services that disabled people rely on or increasing the cost of services such as Shopmobility.

And the outlook isn't much better when it comes to housing, transport and planning. Ministers announced £30 million of funding for 17,000 new homes in England with no requirement for any of the 160 new housing schemes to include accessible homes.

New housing developments are being built with little or no consideration of the public transport infrastructure, availability of healthcare, schools and essential services making these homes inaccessible for Disabled Members.

The government's proposed planning reforms will create an increasingly inaccessible environment for disabled people with all proposed developments in 'Growth Zones' automatically be granted planning permission as local authorities lose the right to refuse applications that don't include disability access.

The planning reforms won't just apply to housing applications but to everything from health centres to shops and leisure facilities to transport hubs and workplaces. And with no need for public consultation, no opportunity to raise objections and no requirement for access statements Disabled Members will be left feeling increasingly isolated and excluded by the inaccessible environments they are forced to live in.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC, Service Group Executives and Labour Link to:

- 1) Through the Local Government Agency, lobby councils for the removal of temporary changes to the environment or infrastructure that were introduced due to Covid-19 that have an adverse impact on disabled people
- 2) Lobby government for the implementation of the recommendations in the Equality and Human Rights Commission report “Housing and disabled people: Britain’s hidden crisis” including:
  - amending Part M of the Building Regulations to make accessibility standards M4(2) the mandatory minimum for all new housing; and
  - requiring 10% of all new homes to be built to the higher wheelchair accessible standards
3. Campaign for a ban on charging for Blue Badge parking in all council owned car parks and for the introduction of a national fund to support services aimed at disabled people such as Shopmobility schemes.
4. Lobby for any reforms to planning law to:
  - require all new planning applications, including in ‘Growth Zones’ to include an access statement that explains steps that will be taken to ensure the development is accessible to disabled people; and
  - give local authorities the power to refuse any planning application, including in ‘Growth Zones’, where the development will not be reasonably accessible for disabled people.

**Northern Region**

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

20.1

In point 4, after the 2 bullet points, add additional bullet points:

“• Require councils to ensure that developments support disabled people to use their place and facilities. To require councils to look retrospectively at areas of the public realm and services that discriminate against people with disabilities and require their change.

• Have a robust system where disabled people can report areas of concern and be able to monitor their progress to ensure that action is taken to rectify the situation. To have mechanism to escalate concerns if actions are not taken.”

**South East Region**

**Negotiating and Bargaining**

**21. Make disabled employees a priority**

Conference notes that there are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK yet disability rights are still being questioned. From July to September 2019, there were over 2,000 disability discrimination cases brought to tribunals and cases are rising. Employers are

legally obliged to treat disabled workers fairly and implement the necessary adjustments/ changes. Yet even with this protection, disabled workers are still having to fight for equal treatment compared with their non-disabled colleagues.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted discrepancies in society for people with disabilities. It is now more important than ever for disabled people to have equal rights and for employers to understand and embrace the widespread nature of disability.

This conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to develop and run a campaign to make disabled people/ members a priority for all employers. This campaign should include:

1. Promoting disability inclusion on methods of communication, ensuring appropriate language and etiquettes are used and communication methods are accessible for all.
2. Promote inclusive practices employers can use to fully include disabled people in their organisations – with perhaps a UNISON award for best disabled employer of the year (nominated by branches)
3. A bargaining pack for branches
4. A guide and training on how to be a good ally of disabled members
5. Training on disabilities for inclusion and awareness of the differences in disabilities
6. Recognising talent of people with disabilities
7. Creating plans to hire and retain disabled employees

***West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Transport Branch  
National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT with qualifications***

21.1

At end of first paragraph insert “Black disabled workers are more likely to be in precarious or zero hours employment and are disproportionately impacted by these issues.”

***National Black Members' Caucus***

21.2

At the end of action point 3 insert

”, including UNISON’s guide to representing Deaf (BSL) members”.

***National Deaf Members' Caucus***

21.3

In action point 5 delete “difference in disabilities” and insert “different adjustments required”.

## **National Disabled Members Committee**

21.4

In point 6, after 'people with disabilities.' add:

"This should include identifying potential leaders and managers and ensuring that they receive the relevant training to enable them to become role models for future disabled workers. Promotion of leadership training for members with disabilities via Disability UK. Help create a positive image of disabled people and their contributions to society."

**South East Region**

---

## **22. Disclosure of Disabilities at Work**

Conference is concerned that many members continue to be reluctant to disclose a disability or long-term health condition to their employer.

It is important that disabilities and/or long-term health conditions should never be considered as something to hide away. Disclosure of a disability in the workplace should be considered as standard practice without fear of reprisals or detriment.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to develop a programme of confidence building aimed at members to enable them to work with local reps and branches in overcoming barriers to disclosure.

**West Midlands Region**

*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT with qualifications*

22.1

At the end of the first paragraph insert "For women workers, there may be particular stigma attached to talking to the employer about menopause, post-natal depression and mental health problems that disproportionately impact women, such as anxiety."

At the end of the final sentence insert "; and consider appropriate steps to help reduce the stigma many people feel in disclosing that they are a disabled worker".

**National Women Members' Caucus**

22.2

Add new second paragraph: "During the COVID-19 pandemic, some disabled workers felt forced into disclosing that they are disabled to their employer as part of the risk assessment process. For Black disabled people this has sometimes compounded their fear of discrimination in the workplace."

At end of last paragraph insert "and to arm reps with the tools they need to support members to disclose that they are disabled."

**National Black Members' Caucus**

22.3

In the third paragraph before “develop” insert “work with UNISON Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to”.

***National Disabled Members Committee***

---

**23. Disability Related Absence: Improving conditions for disabled members**

This conference believes that when disabled members are employed by an organisation, either on a zero-hours or permanent basis, they are put at a disadvantage when it comes to their working conditions, especially in relation to potentially losing out on pay and / or being marked down as off sick when their condition prevents them from working on certain days for reasons not related to actual sickness.

This conference believes that there is a need to review and address this in order to improve pay and conditions for disabled members who frequently have to take time off due to their condition. This should be done by working with organisations / employers to adjust their sickness absence policies to include disability leave alongside existing policy on standard sick leave.

This conference notes that the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 provide support for the need to address this issue and to negotiate with employers to agree amendments to policies in order to fully implement the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

This conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with regions and local branches to develop a toolkit to support members, stewards and other reps such as Workplace Contacts to work with their organisation to work towards amending sickness absence policy to better support disabled members.

***Community and Voluntary Organisations Branch***  
*National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT*

---

**Efficient & Effective Union**

---

**24. Building on the race discrimination protocol**

Conference notes UNISON’s ground-breaking Race Discrimination Protocol which means that cases that potentially involve racism are referred for legal advice at an early stage.

Conference welcomes UNISON’s commitment to fighting racism in this way and notes that for many Black disabled workers it may not be clear if they are being discriminated against because of their race or because they are disabled – or even because of both.

Conference further recognises that under Rule K it is the NEC who makes decisions around representation of members.

Notwithstanding this, conference asks the National Disabled Members Committee to seek legitimate ways of raising the potential benefit of a disability discrimination

protocol with the NEC that are within the rules of the union and respect the NEC's decision making in these matters.

***National Black Members' Caucus***  
***National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT***

---

## **25. Time to change the rules of the game – disabled women fulfilling our potential in our union and in society**

Conference notes that disabled women face barriers to participation in our union, in the workplace and in society.

Over one million of our members are women and a large proportion of these are disabled. Although UNISON has rules about gender proportionality which mean, for example, that where there are two seats at least one must be for a woman, the situation is less clear for disabled women. Although we have fair representation rules these are not clear cut.

For many of us, the daily mentally exhausting slog of dealing with our impairment leaves us with little energy to 'play the game' of getting ourselves known by attending as many regional meetings as possible and canvassing support. Women still do the lion's share of caring work in society, whether for children or elderly relatives, and we can't spend time cultivating votes in our 'free' time. It all feels like a man's game that women are expected to play.

Conference regrets the talent and opportunity that is being lost because so many of us give up or are deterred from being active to the level we could achieve in our union due to caring responsibilities and the barriers we face as disabled people.

One of the few benefits of the pandemic was the move towards online meetings. This led to better engagement by disabled women and could be a model for the future.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Committee to work with Learning and Organising Services and with regions to:

1. Assess and address any gaps in the level of support to help to guide disabled women around the maze of committees and sub-committees so they can find the best role in which they can grow and flourish
2. Analyse support at regional level for disabled women who want to stand for internal positions in the union and any barriers our ways of working may present
3. Develop a short guide to understanding the union's democratic processes that can be used by regions and branches
4. Seek ways of offering online or hybrid meetings in the future to break down the barriers disabled women face.

***National Women Members' Caucus***  
***National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT***

25.1

Add new third paragraph: "Black disabled women in particular are often dismissed as 'aggressive' simply for voicing an opinion or considering standing for election, with sexism and disability discrimination compounded by racism."

After the existing third paragraph insert new paragraph: "For Black women this 'man's game' is intertwined with 'white privilege', the un-earned advantages white people have that are often hard wired into our society."

Add final action point "In all of the above, ensure that intersectionality and the experience of Black women is included."

***National Black Members Caucus***

---

## **Amendments ruled out of order**

### **Not Competent**

#### **Motion 6: Stop the Covid scams that prey on Deaf people**

In the second paragraph delete "scammers are criminals who" and insert "scams are crimes that". At the end of this paragraph insert "Some scams are run by organised criminals who exploit people under their control."

Insert final action point "Support appropriate campaigns for stronger government action to tackle modern day slavery, to support the victims and to bring those who exploit vulnerable people to justice".

***National Disabled Members Committee***

#### **Motion 7: Returning to the Workplace after Covid-19**

at end add

5. Work with NDMC to report these finding in an article for Disabled Members.

***Wolverhampton Local Government Branch***

### **Introduces substantial new subject matter**

#### **Motion 7: Returning to the Workplace after Covid-19**

Delete paragraph two and insert new paragraph as follows: "Research carried out by various organisations including UNISON, Ernst and Young, Universities of Strathclyde and Manchester and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reveal that following the pandemic, the majority of people would prefer to return to work flexibly including homeworking, agile and hybrid working. A number of reasons are given for this including safety, flexibility, caring responsibilities, work life balance, disability or simply easier ways of working."

Insert new third paragraph “Conference welcomes the fact that UNISON has been campaigning for the option to work from home for disabled members as a reasonable adjustment. Conference recognises that there has been a detrimental impact on people’s mental health overall due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that this can be exacerbated by working in isolation. Conference believes that where hybrid or homeworking is in place then employers need to provide appropriate support for the mental health and wellbeing of their workers. Isolation, bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace, domestic abuse, poverty, trying to work at home with caring responsibilities, hate crime, not having disclosed sexual orientation or gender identity either at home or in the workplace – may have an impact on people and the boundaries between home and work can become blurred.”

In paragraph starting “With the return to work,” delete last sentence “Many employers show a lack of empathy for disability issues” and insert “Many employers show a lack of awareness and understanding of their legal obligations and the requirement to provide appropriate reasonable adjustments for disabled workers”.

Add new action points:

- “5. Gather and publicise examples from branches who have had success in negotiating flexible/agile working with employers
6. Continue to campaign for homeworking to be considered a reasonable adjustment
7. Circulate UNISON’s guidance on hybrid working”

### ***Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus***

#### **Motion 19: Review of the Equality Act**

At the end of the second paragraph, insert: “The pandemic also cast light on the deep social, structural, and institutional inequalities and the intersectional aspects of being disabled, Black, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Plus (LGBT+) and women entrenched within the United Kingdom. Many of these deep divisions had already been highlighted in the 2019 report, 'Structurally Unsound', by University College London (UCL) and the Resolution Foundation.”

At the end of the third paragraph, after “EU law” insert “and there are even more complicated issues with regard to Northern Ireland with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in place and separate public duties. Occasional calls from various hostile quarters to repeal the Act, and others calling for its replacement with a “British Bill of Rights”, make this even more concerning. We should rightly be worried by the fragility of human rights legislation in the United Kingdom whilst there remains no formal written constitution to protect it.”

At the end of the fourth paragraph, after “risk of discrimination” insert “where multiple protected characteristics are in play, for example, disabled, Black, LGBT+ people.”

At the end of the fifth paragraph, after “Equality Act” insert:

“, unless this is by association. Recent case law has stated that non-binary and gender fluid persons come within the protected characteristics, but this is not enshrined in legislation. People born Intersex/ Variation of Sex Characteristics (VSC) do not have protection under the Equality Act 2010 unless they identify with another protected characteristic. Therefore, they are denied the right to bodily autonomy.

Conference is concerned about the enforcement of the Equality Act 2010 and the watering down of the powers of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It is further concerned that Commissioners have been outspoken about the gender versus sex debate fuelling the anti-trans rhetoric and culture wars that LGBT+ disabled people are experiencing.”

In the seventh paragraph, after “NEC” insert “, Self-Organised Group Committees”

In the existing bullet point 3, after “Equality Bill” insert “including the dual discrimination provisions and the socio-economic duty” and delete “revisited, reviewed and”.

Insert new action points as follows:

“2. Continue to campaign for the protections and enforcement within the current Act to be strengthened therefore removing the inequalities between the protections afforded to each equality strand.”

3. To campaign for the expansion of the protected characteristics to include carers, Intersex people, Non-binary and gender fluid people”

and renumber the remaining action points.

***Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus***

### **Insufficiently Clear**

### **Motion 2: Disclosure of Disabilities at Work**

at end add:

Work with all SOG's to identify see and unseen disabilities and to support throughout UNISON.

***Wolverhampton Local Government Branch***