

**2022 National Women's Conference
UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**



NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

17th-19th FEBRUARY 2022

**EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
(EICC)**

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Organising and Recruitment

1. Mentoring and Developing Grassroots Women of UNISON

UNISON is committed to proportionality for women but the reality is that in many branches this does not happen. By the time women have done their jobs, looked after the children and their homes, checked on their elderly parents and helped with homework, there is little time to sit and map out what they need to do to develop their whole careers for the future including becoming active in UNISON.

Male activists are more able to become active at an early age

UNISON has a lot of training and education that is targeted specifically at women however there is no one-stop shop that takes women wishing to develop in the branch from confidence building to running the branch and developing a campaign for election to committees and national level. This is badly needed to ensure proportionality in branches and to provide wider choice in succession planning and competition for committees.

Providing a comprehensive mentoring and development plan for women will enable women to receive the appropriate education and advice to enable them to participate at all levels within branches, regions and nationally.

While we acknowledge the work LAOS has done in training packages on mentoring for staff we believe that women mentoring women at branch levels is vital to bring women into activism within UNISON to support women's agenda around barriers and constraints women face

We ask National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with LAOS to create women specific training and mentoring packages to support branches to deliver as well as creating an easy access site for the programmes and training.
- 2) Work with regional women's networks to implement a plan of action to help develop women to become active on all levels to understand the UNISON structures and workings at all levels
- 3) Work with other such UNISON bodies as they deem necessary to provide a comprehensive and accessible mentoring and development scheme for women that will assist with proportionality and succession planning for our union.
- 4) NWC report back to women's conference 2023 on progress of the mentoring packages

***North Cumbria Northumberland & Tyne
& Wear Health***

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Negotiating and Bargaining

2. Part Time Employees and Progression at Work – A Women's Issue

Conference notes: The disproportionate number of part time posts held by women in all areas of the economy particularly public and voluntary sector roles.

According to the House of Commons Briefing paper "Women and the Economy" published on 2nd March 2021, Oct – Dec 2019 there were 5.88 million women in part-time employment – this is 61% of the female workforce as opposed to 13% of male workers.

- The overwhelming majority of part time roles are relatively low paid or low status, without much prospect of career progression or access to advanced training, unless the post holders are prepared to go full time. Women with children should not be forced to make this choice, development should not be at the expense of life outside work.
- This is not an option for many women due to external responsibilities such as childcare or care of older people, and the majority of domestic responsibilities, which tend to devolve on women in families.
- That employers often think of management and responsibility as being the role of one full time person (often a male), in charge of a team or department, and are not open to other models of management such as job share, although there is no evidence to suggest that teams cannot be managed in other ways. This has the effect of discouraging women, particularly those with younger children, from seeking development and progression at work.

Conference believes that UNISON should support its women members in developing their careers, regardless of whether they work full time or part time, and to this end:

- 1) Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee (NWC) to encourage regions and branches to campaign within their own work places to improve access to promotion and training for part time workers comparable with their full-time counterparts, and to produce materials supporting this.
- 2) Conference instructs the NWC to work with Learning and Organising Service (LAOS) to develop confidence building training similar to the successful "Women's Lives" programmes, aimed at part time workers who may wish to develop in their careers.
- 3) Conference instructs the NWC to produce information on rights of part time workers, job-sharing, and alternative models of employment such as annualised hours, which may enable women who work part time to progress and expand their career options, this could include gathering case studies and examples of best practice.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

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3. A Voice for Part Time Workers

Information on UNISON's website about part-time working states that, 'Nearly half of UNISON's members work part-time and the majority of them are women'. Conference this should give these part time women members a loud and clear directive to be included within the very structures of UNISON.

Not all part-time workers are low paid members which is often the mistake that is made. This union is 80% women workers and we need to reflect this in all aspects when we talk about roles our lay members do and ensure their voices are not silent as reflected by this union's membership.

Society's acceptance of part-time workers majority of them women, it always appears that reduced working hours fall at the feet of the woman. Gender roles and the pressure to conform to these roles for women can vary across regions, religions and households. Both women & men report that the biggest barrier for women in paid work is the struggle to balance it with family responsibility but women still shoulder the brunt of this often invisible and undervalued workload.

Part-time women workers have identified that one biggest barriers for them is not feeling fully part of the team in their workplace. Conference we don't need to reflect this barrier in our lay part time workers membership structures they should be recognised and their voices and visibility heard equally. As stated part time workers make up nearly half of our membership.

We call on the National Women's committee:

- 1) To do a survey of part time workers to reflect women members, job role and activism roles and the barriers and constraints that face them being or becoming an activist.
- 2) To review and collate information on how many part time women hold branch, region and national seats across all structures within our union
- 3) To report back to National women's Conference 2023 on progress and outcome of this review

***North Cumbria Northumberland &
Tyne & Wear Health***

4. Don't forget about us when we are not in the room: Black women getting active in UNISON

UNISON can only be the strong, vibrant, effective union it strives to be if Black women are involved and active in every part of its work.

Black women are still underrepresented at branch, regional and national level even though UNISON has 1 million women in membership. This is a trend that the National Black Members Committee are looking to change by working with National

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Women's Committee and supporting initiatives to include Black women across the union.

Equality of opportunity is the number one priority for Black women, but what happens to our issues when we are not in the room?

Black women members have an important role to play in fighting poverty, challenging injustice, eliminating discrimination. Their experiences and voices should be heard in our campaigns including domestic abuse, equal pay, pensions, menopause policies. Getting involved with self-organised groups and becoming an activist is a great way for members to become more active in the union and to develop skills, expertise, and confidence. We all need to be a part of making this happen.

We call on the National women's committee to:

- 1) Work with the NBMC to support Black women members by producing guidance and information, specifically on how to increase the number of Black women active in all union structures and encourage the implementation of proportionality and fair representation at branch level.
- 2) Undertake a survey to assess how many Black women are active in UNISON and find out how more Black women could get involved at senior levels in the union

National Black Members' Committee

5. Proportionality within UNISON

UNISON rules and guidance provides for the principles of proportionality and fair representation to be observed in UNISON elections and delegations.

The UNISON rule book defines proportionality as the representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate (2.14.2)

The UNISON rule book defines fair representation as the broad balance of representation of members of the electorate, taking into account such factors as age and low pay, the balance between full time and part time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills, race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity (2.14.3).

Conference, it is vital that our union is reflective of our membership. Despite significant efforts, there are many areas of our union where there is further work to be done to achieve this.

We ask the national women's committee to:

- 1) Work with regional committees and regional women's committees to review structures at regional and branch level and create a report on proportionality.
- 2) Support branches and regions with how to achieve proportionality in all areas.

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- 3) Report back at the 2023 women's conference on progress made around proportionality within our structures.

Northern Region

6. NEC Election of UNISON President June 2021

One of the fundamental priorities of National Women's Committee has always been the organising of women - especially low paid women - in our union. UNISON is the largest union of women members in the UK. It is our union and we have every right to assume every leadership position - whether it's workplace steward or union president. We expect our NEC to do everything in their power to support our women activists.

Every senior Vice President of UNISON has by convention become President unless they were not re-elected to the NEC. In 2021 a low paid female care worker was due to take on the role having been Vice President for two years. For a union with 80% female membership this was an opportunity to demonstrate our real support and commitment to the majority of our members who are low paid women. For the UK's largest union to have a president representing care workers, who have suffered so much during the pandemic, would have made good on our promises to give care workers the status they deserve and underline their importance to our union and the wider society. Not just a nice thing to do but the right thing to do - a visible sign of our values in action.

Instead, a white male was elected to the position and forms part of an all-white presidential team. On the 21 June 2021 an article was posted on the union's website confirming the election. The article stated "Currently, Paul Holmes is unable to take up the post of president." It is truly shocking that when the NEC had the chance to elect an experienced low-paid disabled woman activist to one of our most senior leadership positions they chose instead to elect a man who was not able to take up the post.

This is very disappointing behaviour from the most senior activists of a union which prides itself on equality and standing up for low paid workers and does not represent the "real change" that many NEC members promised when they stood for election.

The National Women's Committee is asked to:

- a) write to the Presidential team to express disappointment in the 2021 presidential election results.
- b) remind all NEC members of the importance of ensuring low paid women are supported into leadership positions in the union.

UNISON Essex

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7. Never Forget to Lift as You Rise

Our Women Members are our greatest asset

Conference welcomes the election of Christina McAnea as the first woman General Secretary of a major trade union. Representing more than a million women working across the range of public services, UNISON with its commitment to lay democracy and proportionality and fair representation enshrined within our rule book are in a unique position to ensure that women's voices and experiences are heard at all levels of government as representatives, negotiators, and leaders.

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the roles that women have had in the workplace. Whilst some were able to work from home, the jobs of others meant that these women had to go into workplaces, into schools, into people's homes and were reliant on UNISON to ensure that they were safe, protected and appropriately rewarded. It became very clear that the experiences of women workers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were very different to those of England as restrictions differed in the four countries. Additionally, the experiences of Black women, disabled women, LBGT+ women, young women and older women became more distinct as the impact of the pandemic illustrated the risks and dangers that women experience.

Conference believes that it remains vitally important that UNISON continues to reflect the diversity of its membership both within our internal structures and externally with our relationships with the TUC, STUC, WTUC and ICTU, the Labour Party and our international trade union partners.

Conference is deeply saddened by the actions of the NEC to fundamentally change the lay representatives on the TUC General Council so there are no longer any Black women on the UNISON delegation or the voices of anyone who does not live or work in England.

There is a piece of work to be done to ensure that women are supported and empowered to challenge and change our union.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with regions and the other self-organised groups to:

- 1) Work towards developing a programme which will support and mentor women activists into leadership roles in branches and regions.
- 2) Work towards recognising that the different experiences of women in all 4 countries of the UK need to be reflected in all work plans at a UK level. However, sometimes there is the need for a specific piece of work which is only applicable in one country in which case it should be clearly highlighted which of the countries this applies to.

Scotland Region

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8. Supporting carers in the workplace

One in four workers are carers, the majority of these being women. 4.5 million people became unpaid carers as a result of Covid-19, which is an increase of 50% (Carers UK). This figure doesn't include silent carers so the figures will be much higher. The lack of government awareness on the impact of caring responsibilities was noticeable in their response to Covid-19.

Many carers have had to reduce the number of working hours to be able to meet caring responsibilities and some carers have had to use annual leave or unpaid leave. We know many have been driven from the workplace as a result of the challenges they face with the demands of care and employment. While Covid-19 provided a level of increased flexibility at work for some, for others it worsened the problem.

As a union of over 1 million women, this has to be a priority for us. Supporting those with caring responsibilities to remain in the workforce is beneficial to women and to society as a whole. It can help to lift families out of poverty, and will reduce the gender pay gap by enabling and supporting those with caring responsibilities to progress to senior positions. It also increases women's financial independence within society. This can be done with supportive employment terms, conditions and policies, but it also requires culture and attitude change. It requires us to value care, and the work of carers, in all forms.

We believe the following issues are a priority for UNISON, to support carers (the vast majority of which are women) in the workplace.

We ask the National women's committee to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link and labour MP's to lobby government for Improved employment rights for carers including meaningful flexible working rights and carers leave for all employees.
- 2) Work with Labour Link and labour MP's to lobby government for Improved access to free, quality childcare.

EDF Energy (Doxford)

Campaigning

9. Improve affordable, good quality and accessible childcare and create awareness and understanding on how this issue continues to disproportionately affect women following the impact of Covid-19

Access to affordable childcare has been a long-standing challenge for women. In the current climate of adjusting to the impact of Covid-19, further barriers and challenges are being experienced by women endeavouring to have access to and retaining existing good quality early childcare. According to a survey conducted by Pregnant Then Screwed, 57% of working mums considered that their increased childcare responsibilities during the pandemic has negatively affected their career prospects.

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The 30 hours government funded early years provision for working parents has always had its challenges: with its rigidity and failure to actually meet the cost of childcare hour for hour and restraints on how the system operates. Nursery provision has rapidly diminished over the last few years and since the start of the Corona virus pandemic, according to research by the Early Years Alliance, one in four nurseries are expected to close within the next year.

As women are those who primarily take the caring role for children, the inadequate provision is having a very negative impact on their choices. Women make up a considerably higher percentage of those being affected by redundancy and reduced hours as a result of the pandemic. They are also predominantly those who take up the responsibility of having to make alternative arrangements for childcare or juggle working and caring, due to children having to isolate from their childcare setting when displaying a symptom of Covid-19.

The impact of unaffordable and good quality childcare creates joblessness, financial hardship, emotional pressure and instability to women and their families.

Conference, we are asking the National Women's Committee to work with relevant partners to:

- 1) lobby for schemes to provide support systems for additional good quality childcare, and to look to support existing nurseries and childminders to continue to operate during the current climate.
- 2) To work with regions and branches to raise awareness of the negative impact Covid-19 has had women and their families accessing and maintaining childcare.
- 3) to undertake a survey of members about the challenges they are facing with childcare and seeking to consult on their views regarding good quality, affordable and accessible childcare.

Eastern Region

10. Childcare Post Pandemic

"This conference welcomes:

The Government's proposals to extend the right to request flexible working to workers from day one of their employment. This will benefit many women with caring responsibilities.

The move of many employers to introduce hybrid working for many office-based staff allowing women to work from home and the office.

However, this Conference further notes:

Working from home is not a substitute for decent affordable childcare that allows women to effectively carry out their jobs, and for many women, working from home was, and is, not an option. The pandemic demonstrated that women are usually the primary care giver and were expected to work and educate their children at the same time.

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Working parents pay the most for childcare in the UK across Europe. On average £138 for 25 hours care.

The Government provides little or no support for childcare providers or parents. Funding for 2021 was based upon children's attendance in January 2021, meaning many nurseries have been forced to close, and in turn many women have also lost their employment in nurseries.

The Women's Budget Group have demonstrated that 95% of the cost of universal free childcare would be recouped by women working and contributing to the economy.

This Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, service groups and Labour Link to:

- 1) Campaign for safe affordable childcare for all parents;
- 2) Work with partner organisations like Pregnant then Screwed to survey/petition women members on childcare;
- 3) Consider organising a lobby of MPs by women members on the need for safe and affordable childcare."

West Midlands Region

11. Home Working and the Impact on Women

"This conference notes:

That because of the pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns, home working increased in the UK from around 5% to around 30%.

Research carried out in the US identified that women were three times more likely to be the main care giver in the pandemic and that only 37% of women had a positive experience of working from home during lockdowns compared to 79% of men.

Women on average carried out 49 more minutes of housework than men during the pandemic, increasing the "second shift" phenomena.

Despite the Government's pressure to return all office-based workers to the office, many organisations are considering hybrid ways of working moving forward.

Furthermore, this conference notes:

That home working could have positive benefits for women, including reducing the maternity penalty and presenteeism.

However, as we have already seen during the pandemic it can place women in a worse position and could result in women being less visible in the workplace and therefore less likely to being promoted or seen as less committed.

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A recent study from The Behaviour Insights Team suggested working from home could help reduce the gender pay gap, as part of an overall positive approach to flexible working means women may be less likely to reduce their hours. However, they noted it requires organisations to communicate positive messages and build working models in which flexibility around work is encouraged at all levels and that it is not seen simply as a way of accommodating women with caring responsibilities in the workplace.

Therefore, this Conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Provide opportunities for women members to discuss their experiences of working from home with a view to providing responses on the Government's proposed extension of flexible working rights, recognising a one size fits all approach will not work.
- 2) Work with the service groups on any proposals from large employers on hybrid working to enable a woman's perspective to be heard;
- 3) Work with labour Link on any proposed changes to flexible working rights to ensure those rights are real rights."

West Midlands Region

12. The Effect of Covid-19 on Women's Lives

While women were already doing most of the world's unpaid care work prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, research suggests that the crisis and its shutdown response have resulted in an increase in this burden. It is likely that the impacts for women and families will last for years without interventions.

What we refer to as "the economy" would not function without the foundation of work provided by the "care economy": the reproduction of everyday life through cooking, raising children, and so forth.

The paid economy has slowed not only because people are physically not allowed into workplaces, but also because many families currently need to raise and educate their children without institutional support, which is reducing working hours and increasing stress. It has long been recognized that gross domestic product ignores the care economy and heterodox economists have promoted alternative economic systems that could value care work and facilitate a fairer sharing of domestic labour while promoting environmental and economic sustainability.

The work each of us does to maintain everyday life for ourselves and our family depends on our economic and social status and personal family situation, but might include raising children, cooking, cleaning, caring for elderly relatives, shopping, household management, as well as mental tasks such as planning schedules and performing emotional labour such as tending family relationships.

In April, the United Nations (2020) released a report confirming that unpaid care work has increased, with children out of school, heightened care needs of older persons, and overwhelmed health services. But the pandemic and lockdown are not experienced equally: for some people, there are advantages to the ongoing COVID-

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19 pandemic. At the same time, families are under a whole new set of pressures, depending on circumstances. The demands on working parents of our previous "normal" everyday life were already stressful, overwhelming, lonely, and nonsensical and the burden on women tended to be worse.

We call upon UNISON's National Women's Committee work with the NEC to raise awareness and campaign on behalf of women suffering from the effects of COVID, in particular:

- 1) Recognising the unequal burden on women as unpaid care givers balancing this with paid work
- 2) The need for flexible working arrangements that recognise the realities of the demands on women's lives in terms of caring for children and the elderly.

City of Wolverhampton Local Government

13. Long Covid – dealing with the unequal impact on women

Long COVID is a term to describe the symptoms and effects of coronavirus that last longer than 12 weeks beyond the initial diagnosis.

Conference notes that the Office for National Statistics reported that over a 4-week period ending 6th June 2021 almost 1 million people in the UK confirmed they were experiencing long COVID. The rates of self-reported long COVID were greatest in people aged 35-69, females, those living in the most deprived areas, those working in health or social care and those with a pre-existing health condition.

Symptoms may include, persistent fatigue, shortness of breath, brain fog, insomnia, dizziness, depression, anxiety and this list is not exhaustive.

Conference is concerned about increasingly clear evidence that long-Covid affects more women than men. Conference is also concerned about how women experiencing long-Covid are likely to be treated when it comes to workplace sickness absence and performance management processes.

As UNISON set out in submissions earlier in 2021 on a Women's Health Strategy and to the Parliamentary Women and Equalities Inquiry on the Menopause and the Workplace, many employers are unsympathetic and inflexible in regard to sickness absence when it comes to symptoms experienced mainly or wholly by women. Managing their symptoms may mean women miss out on promotions and training, reduce their hours, lose confidence and see their pay levels drop.

The same attitudes on the part of employers affect reasonable adjustments. If long COVID symptoms, have a substantial adverse impact on the employee carrying out day-to-day activities and the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for 12 months, then it could fall within the definition of a disability under the Equality Act triggering the duty to make reasonable adjustments. However, there is evidence to suggest employers are also turning down requests for reasonable adjustments from workers experiencing long-Covid, most of whom will be women.

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Conference calls on National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with other SOGs, Service Groups and the NEC to highlight that long-Covid affects more women than men and raise awareness of the implications for the way women are treated in relation to sickness absence and performance management policies.
- 2) Call on the government for guidance for employers to relax triggers in sickness absence procedures for long Covid.
- 3) Regional Women's Committees and National Women's Officer to research and circulate any information and studies on the particular vulnerability of women to long-Covid and build a strong data base of research to inform lobbying and campaigning.

National Women's Committee

14. The Impact of Covid-19 on Women

According to a report by the United Nations, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that even the limited gains made for gender equality in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back. The pandemic has deepened pre-existing inequalities for women and girls socially, politically and economically. Whilst men are more likely to die from Covid-19, women make up the vast majority of those working on the frontline of the crisis, a total of 77% of those with highest risk to exposure of Covid-19, and 83% of those working in social care.

In the workplace there have been many cases of appalling conditions and treatment of women workers as follows:

- 1) Women working on the frontline having to work without any personal protective equipment (PPE) at all, or with inadequate PPE, with employers showing little regard for safety concerns when they are raised.
- 2) A marked rise in discrimination against pregnant women and new mothers, who were already discriminated against in the workplace. Maternity Action has highlighted case studies of pregnant women and new mothers being targeted for redundancies, and pregnant women being forced to work against health advice, and therefore being left with no other option than to leave their job.
- 3) Migrant women being disproportionately affected by job losses as they are more likely to be in precarious work and do not have access to the benefits system if they are unable to work, resulting in destitution for them and their families.

We have already seen that those sectors most affected by the restrictions that have been put in place are those where women are more likely to be employed, such as hospitality, education, tourism and retail. Women are more likely to be working on insecure or zero hours contracts (usually without sick pay), or working part time. They are also more likely to be in single parent households and on a low income, and therefore have less resilience to the impact of the cut backs. The TUC have

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reported that women have experienced a 79% increase in redundancies since the start of lockdown compared to 23% for men. We have also seen evidence that the furlough scheme through its lack of part time options has forced many women out of the workplace and back into caring roles, whether for their children or vulnerable or older relatives.

The closure of education and nursery settings has had a tremendous impact on working parents, and the majority of the burden has fallen on women, who have had to juggle work with childcare. This has resulted in having to put in a lot of extra hours whilst fulfilling their caring roles, often without any parental leave, sometimes being forced to use annual leave when there is no other option available. We know that

women have always taken on the majority of unpaid labour and caring roles, but what this pandemic has highlighted even more is how much our societal norms and structures are set up to entrench this inequality. This invisible work finally needs to be recognised and paid for.

We have all heard the horrifying statistics about the increase in domestic abuse during the lockdown period. There were 16 domestic abuse killings of women and children during the first three weeks of lockdown, and calls to domestic abuse helplines have increased by 49%. And we know that these are the women who were able to reach out – there are many that have been unable to do so. An investigation by Panorama and Women's Aid provided evidence from many women who described how the pandemic had made their lives living with their abusers much worse. The continuing reduced access to services and support networks is clearly being exploited by abusers. And a decade of austerity has meant that services that support women are already at breaking point and cannot cope with this increased need. The long term impact of this appalling abuse on women and children is immeasurable.

This catalogue of failings has demonstrated how the government is not fulfilling its public sector equality duty, which was designed to ensure that those protected under the Equality Act were given proper consideration. It is therefore vital that we see a dramatic change in many areas to prevent further harm being done to women. As a union with an overwhelming majority of women members, UNISON should be at the forefront of driving these changes.

Conference, we request that the National Women's Committee works with the NEC and all appropriate sections of the union and our partners, including Labour Link to:

- a) Work with regional offices and local branches to conduct a survey of what assistance women need on the particular issues that are affecting them, and use the results of that survey to provide training for officers so that the appropriate support for women is available when it is required.
- b) Lobby for changes to the support schemes that are currently in place along with additional support schemes so that the impacts on women are properly addressed.

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- c) Work with the National Black Member's Committee and the National Disabled Member's Committee to highlight the additional disadvantages that women in these groups face.
- d) Provide guidance for branches to use to work with employers on how they can support women during the pandemic so that gender equality is advanced.

Eastern Region

15. The Impact of Covid-19 on Domestic Abuse

As early as April 2020 a briefing from the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAWC) set out how the COVID-19 pandemic was likely to lead to increased levels of violence against women and girls in the UK, and what Government, business and members of the public should do to try and prevent this. It included predictions on the likelihood of increased domestic abuse, sexual violence, assaults on girls, online abuse and the invisibility of many women and girls during the crisis.

Sarah Green the Director of EVAWC said:

"This pandemic means that more women and children are trapped in homes where control and violence may be escalating and where abusers have a sense of being able to get away with their behaviour with fewer onlookers. Sexual violence against partners and sexual abuse of children in the home may similarly increase."

The briefing also warned that GPs switching to telephone based services would probably make detection and disclosure of abuse by that route less likely and that while specialist women's refuges and counselling centres were making herculean efforts to stay open and move some support to phone and online, this life-saving sector is small and under-funded and needed emergency help to carry on its work.

The report released in August 2020 - Women's Aid. (2020) A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them. Bristol: Women's Aid, confirmed the predictions of the EVAWC briefing:

- 1) Domestic Abuse got worse during the pandemic
- 2) Mental health was severely impacted upon
- 3) Perpetrators used Covid-19 to control and manipulate
- 4) The Lockdown restricted those abused from seeking help and/or leave
- 5) Covid -19 had severe implications for the specialist domestic abuse services, from funding to demand and the impact on employees of those services

UNISON has a proven track record in the campaign to end violence against women and encouraging its regions and branches to work with employers to establish workplace policies that will support women experiencing domestic abuse. However, many of those policies were negotiated before the Covid 19 pandemic, prior to so

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many women having to work from home, before furloughed working arrangements and the forced isolation of so many of our women members.

Our union now needs to be at the forefront of the review of existing services and support available to those women experiencing domestic violence and abuse. The access to legal services and advice, housing and mental health services all need to be included. Such a review should include lobbying government to improve funding and support available to those that were and continue to be caught in this intolerable situation.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- a) work with all necessary internal sections of our union, including Labour Link and recognised outside organisations and charities to seek to achieve improvements to the funding and support available to Women experiencing and seeking to leave situations of Domestic Abuse.
- b) To raise awareness of the devastating impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse.
- c) To work with our own education and welfare sections to make up to date training and advice available to branches and representatives on how to support those members experiencing domestic abuse and to encourage branches to seek a review of any existing domestic violence policies within their workplace.
- d) To campaign for mandatory training for managers and human resource employees on how to support those women experiencing domestic abuse.

Eastern Region

16. Violence Against Disabled Women and Domestic Abuse

Conference notes recent advice from the Metropolitan Police force that women should “run away” if they feel unsafe in the presence of a lone police officer in the wake of the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2020.

Not only is this advice discriminatory towards disabled women, but it also fails to address the root cause and places the onus on women to act to keep themselves safe, not on men to stop being violent towards women. It should not be the responsibility of women to prevent their own murders.

Globally, an estimated 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and older). This figure does not include sexual harassment.

The rates of depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV are higher in women who have experienced violence compared to women who have not, as well as many other health problems that can last even after the violence has ended. Black and LGBT+ disabled women may also be disproportionately affected by violence and struggle to access support services.

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Research has found that:

- 1) Disabled women are more likely to be subjected to abuse or violence than non-disabled women.
- 2) Discrimination, a lack of access to financial and other resources to enable independence, and a lack of accessible services makes escaping abuse or violence extremely difficult for disabled women.
- 3) Regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class, disabled women are assaulted, raped, and abused at a rate of at least two times greater than non-disabled women, yet are much less likely to receive assistance or services if they experience violence.

Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the National Disabled Members committee to:

- a) Seek to ensure the needs of disabled women are considered when the committee is consulted on matters relating to violence against women.
- b) Work with the NEC to take the necessary steps to seek to ensure that Stewards and Branch Officers have access to relevant training to enable them to deal appropriately with members who are subject to domestic abuse.
- c) Encourage branches to negotiate workplace policies on domestic abuse.

National Disabled Members Committee

17. An End to Violence against Women and Girls

Conference acknowledges the endemic nature of abuse, harassment and violence faced by women on a daily basis. The tragic murders of Sarah Everard, Bibaa Henry Nicole Smallman, Sabina Nessa and many other women in the past year have brought to the forefront the scale of violence against women and reinforced how unsafe many women feel in their daily lives.

Male violence threatens women in all areas of their lives - in homes, workplaces, and in public and digital spaces. In addition, since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, evidence has shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic abuse, has intensified.

In the UK:

- 1) More than four-fifths of women have been subjected to sexual harassment.
- 2) 1 in two women have been sexually harassed at work.
- 3) 4 out of 5 women who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace didn't feel able to report it to their employer.

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- 4) Almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- 5) One in two women feel unsafe walking alone after dark.

The focus of the response from the police and government to recent events has been on what women should be doing to protect themselves from violent men. Violence against women and girls is rooted in structural inequalities, power imbalances between men and women and widespread misogyny.

Conference believes that all women have a right to feel safe in their daily lives.

Therefore Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- a) Lobby the National Executive Committee to make ending violence against women and girls a key long-term priority under UNISON's Objective 2 - Bargaining and equalities.
- b) Work with Regional women's committees and branches to encourage employers to become White Ribbon UK accredited.
- c) Work with UNISON Learning and Organising Services to develop and provide specific training for activists on sexual harassment in the workplace.
- d) Campaign alongside the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to ensure the government swiftly introduces the mandatory duty on employers to protect their staff from harassment at work set out in the 2021 Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.
- e) Work with the relevant structures within UNISON to support the principle that misogyny be recognised as a hate crime.

National Young Members' Forum

18. Feminist Recovery Plan Relaunch

The Women's Policy Group Northern Ireland (WPG) is comprised of women from feminist campaigning organisations, migrant groups, human rights and equality organisations and trade unions – including UNISON NI.

In July 2021, the WPG updated and re-launched its Feminist Recovery Plan, which highlights the experiences of women in NI during the pandemic and make the urgent case for a gender-sensitive response. The Plan recognises the pandemic's disproportionate impact on women and considers the economic, health, social and cultural impact of the disease.

Because many of the evidence-led recommendations featured in the Feminist Recovery Plan have yet to be acted on, the WPG has re-launched its Plan this year to include new evidence which shows the severe impact the pandemic continues to have on women.

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In Northern Ireland, 85% of social care staff are part time women workers. 70% of those ineligible for statutory sick pay are women who face losing their income if they stay at home. This means women are more likely to be on social security, more likely to rely on public services and therefore more likely to be in poverty. The government has hardly tweaked the social security system at a time when a collective safety net has never been more important. Many of the punitive and discriminatory designs of social security continue to disproportionately impact women and low-income families; these include the benefits cap, the two-child limit and the five-week wait for Universal Credit payments, which will soon be cut by £20 per week.

The Good Friday Agreement committed to increasing women's representation in public and political life, yet women remain underrepresented in local government, in public and political life and economic decision making. In the context of feminist recovery planning, it is imperative that women are included in decision-making structures across Northern Ireland.

Delaying the implementation of the long overdue strategies below will only further exacerbate existing inequalities:

- Anti-Poverty strategy
- Gender strategy
- Disability strategy
- Racial strategy
- Economic/industrial strategy
- Investment strategy
- Sexual Orientation/LGBTQ+ strategy
- Children and young people strategy
- Childcare strategy
- Strategy to address impacts of climate change
- Energy strategy
- Active aging strategy
- Violence against women & girls strategy
- RSE in schools
- Make misogyny a hate crime

Women's participation is key in the creation of all of the above strategies which are set to be basis of the Programme for Government. However, it is concerning to note that in the "New Decade New Approach" agreement, there was no mention of women at all.

Women have also been absent from the Executive's "Roadmap to Recovery", which failed to mention childcare – an essential component of enabling parents to return to work. The participation of women must be actively encouraged by the NI Executive.

Conference:

- 1) recognises the urgent need for Governments across the UK to address growing women's inequality resulting from the pandemic;
- 2) supports the NI region in its efforts to secure action on the Plan and;

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- 3) calls on the national Women's Committee to use the Recovery Plan as a model to help shape its future programme of work.

UNISON Northern Ireland

19. Women and Universal Credit

69% of low paid or insecure jobs are held by women. Women are the majority of people living in poverty and female headed households are poor – these constitute 90% of lone parent households, 45% of which are living in poverty. (Fawcett Society)

Conference notes and condemns the removal of the £20 per week pandemic-related uplift to Universal Credit by the Conservative government, despite the continuation of the pandemic and the increases to fuel prices, the shortages due to supply chain problems, and the likely rise in general prices and costs caused by this.

While £20 per week may not seem a lot to someone in full time work, if it is thought of as £100 over a five week month, the scale of the cut becomes more obvious – this is a month's fuel cost, or a supermarket shop for a family.

Many of our women members in low paid work either full or part time are recipients of Universal Credit. Many of these will be our members working in the lowest paid roles in care homes, hospitals, council services etc. Also, in many families most of the responsibility in managing family finances devolves upon women, particularly mothers. These are the people who will have to make the "heat or eat" decisions because their benefit has been slashed.

Add to this the rapid and extreme price increases in electricity, gas and fuel, and the shortages of consumer goods, and it may feel like the build up of a "perfect storm" for our lowest paid women members, many of whom are also in high risk front line jobs during the pandemic.

This cannot continue.

Conference calls upon:

- 1) The National Women's Committee (NWC) to work with the wider Union, and through them, the TUC, to campaign on the destructive impact of the removal of the uplift on women low paid workers, who are disproportionately represented in Universal Credit claimants, and for its restoration.
- 2) The NWC to work with Labour Link to encourage Labour MP's in Parliament to vigorously pursue the reinstatement of the cut, and a review of the impact of Universal Credit on women and families.
- 3) The NWC to produce information on other sources of help for women with financial difficulties, such as There For You, regional debt and money advice services.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

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20. Disabled Women Paying the Price of Punitive Government Policy

Conference notes that the 2020 National Women's Conference passed policy on how women were on a "cliff edge" with respect of to the poverty trap that the need to stay within the thresholds of Universal Credit has created. The pandemic has made this situation much worse. Disabled women are faced with a perfect storm of increasing household bills and reduced benefit levels. The £20 per week increase which was introduced as an emergency measure at the start of the pandemic was a lifeline for the very high proportion of disabled women who were working in low paid jobs.

Conference believes that it is fundamentally wrong that low paid women workers in the NHS and Social Care in Scotland felt that they had no option but to forgo the thank you payment that the Scottish Government made available last winter because of the effect that it would have on their benefits.

It is absolutely clear that we are now entering into another period of austerity and rising inflation. Fuel costs are rising and it is likely that other household costs will rise too. There will be another increase in National Insurance and occupational pension costs will rise as well. It is also widely predicted that the low mortgage interest rates will start to rise which will have an impact on housing costs.

For many disabled women who are dependent on private transport or taxis or require higher levels of heating in their homes, the increasing costs of living will have a drastic effect.

Conference instructs the National Women's committee to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Work with regional women's groups, self organised groups and service groups as appropriate to build a body of evidence showing the effects of austerity on disabled women members' household incomes, particularly low paid members who are reliant on Universal Credit to supplement their wages.
- 2) Work with Labour Link to lobby for a benefits system which enables disabled women to work without being financially disadvantaged.

National Disabled Members Committee

21. Sexual harassment – more work to do

Conference welcomes the announcement by the UK government in July 2021 that it will introduce a new duty on employers to protect all their staff from sexual harassment at work and protections for workers harassed by clients or customers as well as colleagues. This announcement came as part of the government's published response to the 2019 consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace, and commits the government to: -

- 1) Introducing a mandatory duty on employers to protect their staff from sexual harassment at work.

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- 2) Introducing explicit protections for employees from harassment by third parties, for example customers or clients.
- 3) Considering extending employment tribunal time limits from three to six months.
- 4) Tasking the Equality and Human Rights Commission with developing a statutory code of practice on sexual harassment and harassment at work, setting out the steps that employers should take to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, and what can be considered in evidence when determining whether the duty has been breached.

This is a victory for UNISON and the #ThisIsNotWorking alliance, the TUC-led coalition of unions, women's rights bodies and business organisations that campaigns for employers to be proactive in tackling sexual harassment, with training and policies that cut to the root of the problem: abuse of power in the workplace. However, conference recognises that UNISON must continue to press the government to keep to these commitments and introduce a properly enforceable law so that all employers make prevention a priority and can be held to account if they do not act.

Conference is concerned that sexual harassment is pervasive in workplaces and that there is evidence that the requirement to work from home during the pandemic has led to online sexual harassment becoming more prevalent.

Figures from the TUC show that half of women have been sexually harassed at work, two thirds of LGBT+ people have experienced it and worryingly, 4 out of 5 people don't feel able to report it to their employer. UNISON's recent joint survey with the Nursing Times revealed worryingly that 73% of respondents had not reported incidents, many because they felt nothing would be done. The survey also highlighted that in many workplaces sexual harassment is not treated seriously and has become 'normalised'.

Achieving the changes to the law is urgent. As UNISON set out in its submission to the Home Office on the Government's violence against women and girls strategy in February 2021, workplace culture that tolerates sexual harassment also allows violence to fester.

Conference notes the need to refresh and update UNISON's own guidance on sexual harassment to take account of new ways of working due to the pandemic, particularly video-conferencing.

In addition, conference notes that in June 2019 the International Labour Organisation adopted Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, the first international treaty to recognize the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, and that the convention came into force on 25 June 2021. Governments that ratify Convention 190 will be required to put in place the necessary laws and policy measures to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work. It is concerning that the UK has not yet ratified it.

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Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the National Executive Council and other parts of the union as appropriate to:

- a) Continue to press for the government to introduce the changes to the law, outlined above, that it has committed to
- b) Continue to build the campaign for zero tolerance of sexual harassment in workplaces, including on-line abuse
- c) Refresh and update the UNISON guidance on sexual harassment, and promote it widely in the union
- d) Campaign for the UK to ratify ILO Convention 190
- e) Work with Labour Link to raise the campaigns in points a) and d) with the Labour party

National Women's Committee

22. Stalking – Strengthen the Laws to Protect Women in the Workplace

Stalking is a behaviour that is designed to intimidate, harass, threaten and pursue an unwilling target. It can consist of harassing phone calls, following the target, contacting them repeatedly, frequently tracking their movements, and more recently, unwanted and obsessional contact on social media. It can be perpetrated by anybody but is most often carried out by men against women, either someone that they have been in a relationship with, or someone random they have picked out. The Action on Stalking (Scotland) charity uses the FOUR acronym – Frequent, obsessional, unwanted, Repeated – as a definition of stalking.

It is known that stalking can sometimes escalate to assault, rape and murder, regardless of the previous relationship between stalker and victim and cannot be treated lightly.

Women who have been stalked have experienced threats, harassment, unwanted contact at work and at home, and some have had tracking devices fitted to cars, social media, computer and phone hacking, and other forms of invasive and frightening harassment.

Data from the England/Wales Crime Survey shows up to 700,000 women are stalked each year, although there are no official statistics on cyberstalking.

Conference believes that:

- 1) Women have the right to live their lives free of fear, harassment, restrictions on the normal freedoms everyone should enjoy. This includes the right to end contact when a relationship ends without fear of recrimination or revenge.
- 2) Stalking is a form of assault which can leave victims traumatised for many years afterwards.

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- 3) Stalking can be part of domestic abuse and is sometimes the first step in a process that can lead to rape and murder.
- 4) Stalking affects women in the workplace, and therefore needs to be addressed in security safety and domestic abuse policies by employers.

Conference Calls upon the National Women's Committee:

- a) To work with organisations such as Paladin, Suzy Lamplugh Trust etc, and their equivalents in the devolved nations on raising awareness of the impact of stalking on victims and their friends and family, campaigning for effective support for victims and lobbying for changes to the law to deal with perpetrators.
- b) To produce up-to-date information about stalking and harassment in the workplace for branches to use when working on domestic abuse or security policies with employers.
- c) To work with UNISON Labour Link to liaise with elected representatives and peers in both the Westminster Parliament and the devolved governments to raise awareness of Baroness Royall's work to introduce legal changes to ensure offenders are automatically monitored under an existing police database. Her amendment was lost from the 2021 Domestic Abuse bill but should be revived and progressed separately.
- d) To produce effective information sheets for branch-based representatives to make available to women members about their rights, and what to do if they think they may be a victim of stalking.

National Women's Committee

23. For safety – end support for the 'Nordic model'

Conference notes that UNISON's national women's conference led the development of UNISON's current policy on sex workers, which was agreed in 2010 when National Delegate Conference adopted a motion from women's conference supporting the Nordic model, a legal model based on decriminalising the selling of sexual services while introducing a 'sex buyers law' criminalising those who purchase those services.

Conference notes, however, that in 2018 UNISON women's conference rejected the motion "Nordic Model Now!" which called for women's conference to affirm its policy of supporting the Nordic Model.

Conference recognises that the great majority of sex workers are women. It also recognises that some women sex workers identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender plus (LGBT+).

Conference notes that national LGBT+ conference has adopted motions at several conferences which:

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- a) Recognise that criminalisation of any kind, including of buyers, increases the risks for sex workers;
- b) Oppose the introduction of a sex buyers law, because the criminalisation of buyers means sex workers having to take more risks with their own health and safety to protect buyers – their clients – from detection by the police;
- c) Reflect the view that sex workers are workers, who should have the same rights and protections as workers in other industries;
- d) Recognise that, as a trade union, we should not be calling for laws which put sex workers, including women sex workers, at greater risk.

Conference notes there is no legal model anywhere in the world that has been shown to increase, or decrease, the number of people who sell sex. The evidence is that all that laws can change is whether people, including women, do sex work in dangerous conditions or in safer conditions.

Conference further notes that legislation which criminalises the purchase of sex, known as 'the Nordic Model' (and sometimes called the 'End Demand' approach), is widely opposed by international bodies and by anti-trafficking, women's rights, health, and human rights organisations, including:

- 1) Amnesty International, which in 2016 adopted its "Policy on state obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of sex workers", which includes advocating for the decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual adult sex work.
- 2) The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, which in 2011 published a report that explored the impacts of anti-trafficking initiatives that utilise an 'end demand' approach, including the criminalisation of clients, and states that such approaches cause serious harm to sex workers by putting their livelihoods at risk, increasing the stigma they face, and intensifying police power over them.
- 3) The World Health Organisation, which in 2014 published guidelines for helping to prevent the spread of HIV in the most-at-risk populations, including sex workers (the majority of who are women), that recommended that countries decriminalise sex work.
- 4) Other organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing, UNAIDS, Anti Slavery International, Freedom United, the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, Human Rights Watch, ILGA World, ILGA Europe, Transgender Europe, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Survivors UK, The Gemini Project, and sex workers organisations.
- 5) Trade unions including GMB, ASLEF, UCU, BFAWU (Bakers, Food, and Allied Workers Union) and the RMT.

Conference recognises that, as women trade unionists, we should not be calling for laws which put women sex workers at greater risk.

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Conference therefore agrees that women's conference should no longer support the introduction of a 'sex buyers law', and calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- A) Engage in a dialogue with the National LGBT+ Committee, other National self-organised groups, National Executive Council and other bodies within the union as appropriate, with a view to reviewing UNISON policy in this area
- B) Report back to 2023 Women's Conference.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender plus Committee***

24. Menopause and Black women

Research suggests that there may be some variations for Black women in the average age at which the menopause takes place between women of different ethnic backgrounds. Some studies suggest that symptoms may be more prevalent and more severe for Black women, although research is not yet clear on the reasons for this.

Black women workers are also more likely to be in insecure work on casual or zero hours contracts, making it even more difficult to cope with significant menopausal symptoms.

Black women may face additional difficulties dealing with menopausal symptoms, particularly if there is racial discrimination in the workplace, which can mean problems in accessing appropriate support or having their symptoms taken seriously.

They may not have access to the same standard of healthcare due to health inequalities and consequently may experience inferior diagnosis and treatment of the menopause. This could lead to prolonged symptoms and more time off to attend additional appointments.

UNISON has produced guidance and a model policy on menopause, and with that in mind to expand on this for representatives in the workplace

We call on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Explore with the National Black Members Committee Women's Caucus how employers can create workplace policies that consider the impact of menopausal symptoms for Black women, to ensure that discrimination does not take place.
- 2) Undertake research of Black women's experience at work, via a survey for Black women in UNISON and how best to support concerns
- 3) Encourage all NWC regional reps to contact and raise this issue with their respective regional Women's Committee to discuss a joint strategy involving Black women in addressing this issue in the workplace.

National Black Members' Committee

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25. A Buffer Zone to Protect Patients and Workers

"This Conference notes:

Across the country there are services offering pregnancy advice and terminations. These types of medical centres attract protesters who hold vigils, hand out leaflets and intimidate those on their way to access services.

This has an impact on the wellbeing of those women accessing this type of service and also has a detrimental effect on those who are simply going into work who have to run the gauntlet of this type of intimidation.

Many of these clinics are in ordinary residential areas and this is resulting in residents, schoolchildren and local business's becoming exposed to this type of protest, which can include the handing out of graphic materials, shouting and at times the use of megaphones.

This Conference believes:

- a) That a woman has a fundamental right to choose regarding termination of their pregnancy;
- b) That those attending appropriate healthcare have the right to do this without fear or intimidation;
- c) That those who work in services have the right to go to work without fear or intimidation;
- d) That those who travel past (e.g., because their place of work, home, school or college is in the immediate area) also have the right to do so without fear or intimidation.

Conference notes the following:

- 1) There is legislation, such as Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). For a PSPO to be put in place a council needs to receive a substantial amount of complaints prior to carrying out a consultation.
- 2) There is a proposed bill in Parliament to put a 150-metre Buffer Zone around clinics. The Buffer Zone is unlikely to have support from Parliament in time to make it into legislation.
- 3) There is on-going concern raised by MPs on this issue and in a statement in Parliament on 9 November 2020, the Home Secretary said "..... we are considering whether more work should be done to protect those accessing or providing abortion services...."
- 4) A PSPO is therefore the quickest way forward but will need support from a number of sectors.

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This Conference asks National Women's Committee to:

- i) To continue to campaign on supporting Buffer Zones and PSPOs. In particular to work with the NEC and Labour Link to support the work of Rupa Huq MP (Ealing), leading a cross-party group of MPs on an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to get buffer zones included in the bill.
- ii) Produce a draft letter for branches to send to MPs and Councillors requesting that a consultation takes place as soon as possible to support the safety of patients, workers, and the general public around the locality of this type of healthcare facility.
- iii) To join the British Pregnancy Advice Services' Campaign "Back Off", that campaigns for Buffer Zones and inputs into community groups. <https://back-off.org/>.

West Midlands Region

26. Decriminalise and defend the right to choose

This Conference notes:

- a) The near total ban on abortion in Texas by restricting it to the first 6 weeks of gestation, a time when most people don't even know that they are pregnant
- b) That this threatens the Roe vs Wade ruling of 1973 that made abortion legal in the US.
- c) The huge surge of anger and resistance to this attack with large demonstration in 50 US states on 2 October challenging the Texan ruling and demanding that women and people have the right to access abortion care.
- d) We are proud that UNISON supported a solidarity march called by Abortion Rights UK on 2 October to the American Embassy and a number of our London branches attended with their banners.

This Conference believes:

- 1) Any attack on abortion rights anywhere in the world is an attack on us all.
- 2) The Texas ruling gives confidence to anyone who wants to see women and people forced to the back streets.
- 3) The right to abortion is under severe attack in other countries around the world such as Hungary and Poland.
- 4) Abortion is a class issue. Rich women and people can always access abortion whatever the legal status. It is working class women and people who will suffer.
- 5) We cannot be complacent in the UK - abortion is still a criminal offence on the statute book and that has to be removed.

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- 6) In Northern Ireland whilst abortion is now legal, the lack of access to health care means women and people still have to travel to access abortion.
- 7) Abortion Rights UK plays a pivotal role in defending abortion rights and fighting for safe, free, legal abortions.
- 8) Access to abortion is a trade union issue and with over a million women in our union we believe passionately in defending a women or persons right to choose.

This Conference resolves:

- i) To ask the National Women's committee to work with the relevant structures in our union to keep members informed about the ongoing fight to defend abortion rights.

Camden UNISON

Equalities

27. Single Parents Rights Campaign: Supporting Single Parent being added to the Equality Act 2010 as a protected characteristic

Conference notes that within the UK approximately a quarter of families with children are headed by a single parent and of those single parents 90 % are female. Historically single parents have been demonized and discriminated against in a systemic way. This has led to a situation where single parents will face difficulties in work, around renting homes, when taking children for days out and in many other aspects of their lives. Yet, single parents are not named as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010

Single parents are now encouraged into work when their children are fairly young (and it is more likely that single mothers will have younger children). Despite this, single parents face more barriers within employment than people in two parent families and hiring practices are often unfavourable to their responsibilities. The struggle of juggling home life alone while working means that 22 % of single mothers need to claim out of work benefits again within a year of starting employment. Statistically single mothers are now just as likely to be employed as single women with no dependents, but they are more likely to live in poverty than any other adult group. On average single parent family incomes being 27% less than other families.

The Single Parents Rights campaign was started by a single parent who had found rules and policies were too often putting her at a disadvantage. This was clearly seen with rules around COVID and contact with others. The campaign is now backed by numerous charities and single parent groups. A recent study by the Single Parents Rights campaign found that 80% of respondents felt they had experienced discrimination and 96% of respondents felt single parents should be added to the Equality Act 2010.

Conference believes that single parents should be added to the Equality Act 2010 as a protected characteristic so that they can be given the same protection as other

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discriminated against groups. This will give single parents protection from discrimination inside and outside of work.

Conference there calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with Labour Link, National Committees and service groups to:

- 1) Support and promote the single parent's rights campaign
- 2) Lobby the Government to implement single parent friendly policies and create a National Policy
- 3) Check that UNISONs own policies, work practices, training etc. do not discriminate against single parents.

North West Region

28. Equality for trans women – louder and prouder!

The toxic debate ignited by the UK government's public consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) underlined the importance of our union supporting and representing our trans members effectively.

Attacks on trans rights have continued to escalate. In September 2021, the Council of Europe published a detailed report 'Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe', which states "In the United Kingdom, anti-trans rhetoric, arguing that sex is immutable and gender identities not valid, has also been gaining baseless and concerning credibility, at the expense of both trans people's civil liberties and women's and children's rights".

The report goes on to say "The 'gender-critical' movement, which wrongly portrays trans rights as posing a particular threat to cisgender women and girls, has played a significant role in this process, notably since the [consultation on updating the GRA] In parallel, trans rights organisations have faced vitriolic media campaigns, in which trans women especially are vilified and misrepresented".

Such attacks have included groups trying to roll back the rights of trans people encouraging supporters to lobby public bodies to remove 'gender' from their equality policies and replace it with 'sex'.

There has been a sustained attack on Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme, which gives advice, support and resources to employers on meeting their statutory requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and provides support and tools for organisations to improve their practice beyond the legal minimum. There have been repeated false claims that Stonewall is misinterpreting the Equality Act's protected characteristic of gender reassignment in its advice to organisations. Stonewall's advice is based on the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Equality Act Code of Practice, which was reaffirmed by the High Court in May when it threw out an attempt by one of the co-founders of the anti-trans LGB Alliance to launch a judicial review against the EHRC's guidance.

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Attacks are being coordinated to undermine support for Stonewall's work on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) equality at work.

The tactics being used by those campaigning to roll back the existing rights of trans people, particularly the vilification of trans women, are almost identical to the tactics seen around the time of Section 28, when gay men were portrayed as sexual predators and a danger to children to spread fear and mistrust.

Conference recognises that recent years have seen a concerted international campaign against trans people and there is growing evidence of this being linked to the far right and religious-right groups - movements dedicated to undermining women's rights, who see transgender rights as a way to get greater support for their anti-abortion, anti-LGBT+ views.

Conference notes that:

- 1) The Southern Poverty Law Centre in the United States (US) reported that in 2017, at an annual right-wing, fundamentalist event called the Values Voter Summit, transphobia was discussed as a tactic to be deployed, because rallying against homosexuals was not working any more, One of the far-right panellists said: "Trans and gender identity are a tough sell, so focus on gender identity to divide and conquer...trans activists need the gay rights movement to help legitimize them...If you separate the T from the alphabet soup, we'll have more success".
- 2) The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation's study on the evolution of extremism in the first 100 days of the Biden Administration found that "Transphobia has long been one of the most major and ubiquitous narratives around which the far right mobilises... Transphobia should be recognised as a security concern."
- 3) Some anti-trans individuals and groups in the UK have links with far right and religious-right groups in the US and elsewhere
- 4) Targeting a minority, and spreading false information to provoke hatred and distrust by preying on people's fears, are classic far right recruitment tactics UNISON's position is clear: trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary identities are valid. Conference recognises, however, that UNISON now needs to become more visible and more vocal in promoting Trans equality inside and outside of the union, and that the women's self-organised group has a crucial role to play.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the National LGBT+ Committee and other parts of the union as appropriate to:

- a) Explore ways to increase the visibility of UNISON's work to promote and support equality for trans women
- b) Promote Trans ally training widely within the women's group

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- c) Encourage women members and branch groups to urge employers to join the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme if they are not already members
- d) Promote materials to help women members, and branch and regional groups, counter the gender critical narrative and provide information on the links between the gender critical movement in the UK, the far right and the religious- right
- e) Continue to support the reform of the GRA

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender plus Committee***

29. CEDAW – essential for women's rights

Conference recognises that CEDAW, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, is significant in the international human rights framework because it is exclusively devoted to gender equality. It is one of the core international human rights treaties of the UN and it requires countries that have ratified it to undertake legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights.

Countries that have ratified CEDAW, including the UK which ratified it in 1986, are expected to work towards implementation of its provisions and must submit a report, usually every four years, to the CEDAW Committee, the UN Committee which monitors the implementation of CEDAW, giving a report of their progress.

The Committee examines the measures implemented by the country to comply with its obligations under the Convention and then releases a report with its findings, called 'concluding observations', and recommendations for concrete steps to enable the realisation of women's rights.

Following the last review of the UK in 2019, the Committee produced a report which concluded that the UK is still not compliant with the Convention, and its Concluding Observations listed concerns and recommendations under 17 themes for the UK Government to address before the next monitoring round in 2023.

Some of the recommendations were reiterated from previous reviews in 2009, 2013 and in 2018, including a recommendation for the UK government to incorporate CEDAW into domestic law throughout all territories under its jurisdiction.

The Government's response was that it did not agree that it needed to incorporate all the provisions of CEDAW into domestic legislation 'because women and girl's rights under CEDAW are already largely covered under domestic legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act'.

However, the manifestos of the Scottish National Party and the Welsh Labour Party for the May 2021 devolved Parliamentary elections committed them to introducing the CEDAW convention into Scottish and Welsh law, and work is already underway in both Scotland and Wales on draft legislation.

Further, the CEDAW People's Tribunal, a civil society initiative, conducted a hearing over three days in June 2021 that examined the case for the UK to introduce

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CEDAW into domestic legislation, and published its 252 page report in September. The report includes comprehensive proposals backed up by research on a very wide range of areas to improve the rights of women. It provides a 'blueprint' for a Women's Bill of Rights to transform national law and law in different parts of the UK to end all forms of discrimination against women and to properly implement CEDAW.

Conference recognises that these positive developments have opened up a new basis for campaigning for the incorporation of CEDAW into domestic legislation, and it welcomes the adoption by the 2021 Labour Link Forum of a motion that called on the Labour Link National Committee to campaign for the Labour Party to take a policy position that is in favour of the implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation and to develop a campaign to pressurise the government to do so.

Conference therefore asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with the National Executive Council to develop a campaign for the implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation, working with other organisations as appropriate
- 2) Raise these issues with Labour Link and seek to develop a campaign for the Labour Party to support implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation and a campaign to pressurise the government to do so.

National Women's Committee

30. Incorporate CEDAW into domestic legislation

CEDAW is the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women – also called the International Bill of Rights for Women.

CEDAW provides an international framework for States to take responsibility for tackling discrimination against women and achieving substantive equality for women in both the private and public spheres. It outlines a set of rights of women in a variety of areas including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It is the first human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women.

The Convention was adopted by the UN Assembly in 1979 and entered into force as an international treaty in 1981. The UK ratified CEDAW in 1986. By ratifying, the UK committed to the articles, rights and procedures within it. This means that the UK committed to eliminate discrimination against women in all aspects of life and to protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of women under all circumstances.

The Convention is overseen and monitored by a UN committee of 23 experts on women's rights from around the world. The committee is known as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (the CEDAW Committee). State Parties must report to the Committee who examine the measures implemented by the country to comply with its obligations under the Convention. The Committee meets twice a year and countries are examined on a rolling basis, approximately every four years.

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In 2019, the UK Government attended a hearing in Geneva with the Committee of the Convention on how we are complying with the Convention. Following the hearing, the Committee produced a series of Concluding Observations, listing concerns and recommendations under 17 themes for the UK Government to address until the next monitoring round in March 2023. One of the key recommendations was for the UK to incorporate CEDAW into domestic law throughout all territories under its jurisdiction. This would give CEDAW – the rights of women – more teeth in the UK.

Conference, UNISON is a trade union whose membership is made up majority of women, we are seeing the rights of women be undermined again and again by our government. We need all the tools available to help us to protect our Human Rights. As the largest female movement in the UK. We should be ones leading this campaign for the vital protection of our women. Conference we call on National Women's Committee:

- 1) To work with the National Labour Link, NEC and all other structures within UNISON to develop a comprehensive campaign for the implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation.
- 2) Work with Laos on developing a training and awareness package on CEDAW around the understanding of CEDAW for our lay members.
- 3) National Women's Committee to report back to Women's conference 2023 on progress made

South Tyneside Local Government

**2022 National Women's Conference
UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

MOTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER

Beyond remit of the Conference

Food Poverty and use of foodbanks

Conference recognises that:

- the exponential growth of foodbanks as the Tory Austerity Agenda has rolled on for the last 12 years. This is nothing to celebrate. Each foodbank stands for a failure of our society to ensure that its members have enough to eat each day
- That workers who produce the wealth of our society are put at risk by political strategies that deny them food
- That the next generation of workers are growing up malnourished and reliant on foodbanks
- That there is enough food produced in the world to feed every single human being.

Conference further recognises

- That our members are forced into foodbank use because of low pay and zero hours contracts
- That our members form the bedrock of support across our society, performing health, social care and housing functions that meet basic human needs, and without our members doing this work society would fail.
- That women form most of our trade union, and therefore many of these roles.
- That women hold 'sandwich' responsibilities, caring for dependent children and caring for aging parents at the same time as holding down these jobs, and making sure that everyone is fed.
- That the removal of the £20 uplift to Universal Credit will impact our members whose pay is topped up with working benefits – another pay cut!

We are calling on the National Women's Committee to Campaign on the following issues:

- Join with the Marcus Rashford campaign EndChildFoodPoverty
- Survey women members discreetly on use of foodbanks and publish results
- Work at a national level with Trussell Trust and Fare Share to campaign for an end to food poverty.
- Improve regional welfare funds and to support women members in food poverty.
- Lobby Parliament to reintroduce the £20 uplift o Universal Credit

North West Region

Supporting women members

Newcastle City Branch Motion to Women's Conference February 2022
Supporting Women members

Conference notes that UNISON is the UK's largest union representing 1.3 million members who provide public services. Currently 78% of the membership identify as women, a total of over 1 million women members.

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There is no doubt that the strength and stability of UNISON lies in our ability to recruit, support, and develop our women activists. UNISON Women members are at the forefront of many of our most important campaigns. UNISON's women members have successfully negotiated on issues such as domestic abuse, equal pay, and maternity rights, but we can do much more.

TUC research in 2014 revealed that women were under-represented relative to the proportion in membership among shop stewards, health and safety reps, branch officers, union conference delegates and union executives. Part time workers are also under-represented in Trade Unions, the majority of whom are women. It is recognised that Women face unprecedented challenges and still face inequality in the current climate and erosion of hard fought for rights. Gender pay gap, sexual harassment, flexible working, access to maternity rights and progression are just a few workplace issues affecting our women members.

Our Union continues to provide additional support to our women members via our self-organised groups led by members or Women officers in a voluntary capacity. These groups are doing amazing work to continue to engage with our women members, representing them and supporting their development to be active voices in our union. However, understandably capacity and facility time issues can make this demanding and conflicting.

To meet our aims to continue growth and remain the largest union we need to maintain and improve our recruitment levels but also to target our 'hard to reach' and lower paid women members. Only by a targeted approach can we ensure that we offer the protection and opportunities of UNISON and encourage more women to join us and take on active roles within our union.

Newcastle City Branch SOG group discussed these challenges and have developed a stand-alone proposal for a dedicated part time Women's Officer role for a year as a pilot. Women members in the branch were consulted and asked their views. The pilot project is designed, shaped, and will be delivered based on grass root priorities of women members. This was discussed and agreed at Branch Committee with full support. The voices of women members in our branch were heard loud and clear. The evidence-based project will ensure women members reach their potential to lead change in the workplace.

The role aims to improve recruitment and organising of low-paid women within Newcastle City Branch and enhance the work of the branch women's self-organised group.

The outcomes include increasing the number of women recruited to UNISON in target areas, recruiting new activists and increasing overall engagement with women members to encourage personal development via UNISON Training and Education and developing a stronger platform for women's priorities to be heard at grass root level.

This dedicated Women's project has the potential to really make a real difference. Conference calls on National Women's Committee to:

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- 1) Through regions, support branches to have a focused and structured approach to the recruitment of women members, particularly lower paid women workers.
- 2) Through regions, support branches to provide structured support to women members to enable them to become active and take up leadership roles within UNISON.

Newcastle City

Beyond the remit of the Committee

Domestic Abuse

Conference notes that: Domestic abuse impacts on women in their workplace as well as their home. There is no timeline to abuse or location preference, this can happen anytime of the day at any place.

Pre-pandemic the workplace was a key place and provided safety away from their perpetrator. Women have become even more vulnerable and isolated from help while having to work from home during the pandemic.

As more and more of our members work from home it is vital that we look at and find new ways and a new approach to support our members from domestic abuse. Also play an active part in reminding our employers that they have a duty of care and legal responsibility to protect their employees under health and safety law. Even though our members are working in their home environment we need to remind employers of their responsibilities to ensure our members are safe and that they need to do everything to safeguard our members, their employees. It's a different location to their usual workplace but its still the responsibility of the organisation to keep all employees safe and well.

We are the U.K.'s largest public service trade union, with around 1 million women members, UNISON during the Pandemic there has been a marked increase in traffic to UNISON's learning pages by reps searching specifically for resources and materials help address domestic abuse. This evidence is showing that our reps are dealing with more cases of domestic abuse and need training and support more and more.

Some visitors to our website accessing this information would also have been members looking for help for themselves on a site they can readily hide or explain rather than contacting an abuse helpline or organisation.

Conference further recognises that working women, especially the low paid, are prevented from being able to flee to a place of safety by having to fund their own place in a refuge. They just don't see this as an option due to financial problems and feel forced to stay with their perpetrator and feel trapped from safety.

Our union needs to focus on having clear ways to help all our members to safety, with real focus on the lower paid who are most vulnerable victims and re-assure our members that there is a way and we can guide and support them to keep them safe.

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Our members need access to a clear way they can gain help and support and understand how we can help them with resources to get help, empower them to remove themselves to a place of safety without the worry of how its possible to do so. Clear resource support and how they can access this is vital to protect our members.

We call on the National Women's Committee to:

- Provide mandatory training for all UNISON stewards and officers on domestic violence.
- Carry out a survey of all UNISON members asking two simple questions: (i) how do you identify? and (ii) Have you ever experienced domestic violence?
- Ask all UNISON branches to provide support for women having to flee without preparation, including photocopying essential documents such as birth certificates, passports and any rent/mortgage agreements and emergency packs including basic toiletries.
- Support the TUC's campaign encouraging all employers to develop and implement workplace domestic abuse policies; provide mandatory training for all employees; and offer victims 10 days' paid leave and a Day 1 right to flexible working.
- To support the TUC's call for wider reforms of Universal Credit; funding for domestic abuse support services; extending the rail to refuge beyond the Pandemic.

North West Region

Not competent

Domestic Abuse is a Gendered Crime

Every case of domestic abuse should be taken seriously, and everyone given access to the support they need. All victims should be able to access appropriate support. Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. They are also more likely to have experienced sustained physical, psychological or emotional abuse, or violence which results in injury or death.

There are important differences between male violence against women and female violence against men, namely the amount, severity and impact. Women experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt or killed than male victims of domestic abuse. Further to that, women are more likely to experience higher levels of fear and are more likely to be subjected to coercive and controlling behaviours.

Domestic abuse perpetrated by men against women is rooted in women's unequal status in society and is part of the wider social problem of male violence against women and girls. Sexism and misogyny set the scene for male abusive partners' coercive and controlling behaviours. Sexism and misogyny serve to excuse abusive behaviour by men in intimate relationships with women and put up barriers to female survivors being believed and supported to leave abusive men.

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This influences how women's domestic abuse can affect work as well as home they are more stressed, start to withdraw within themselves not just at home, at work also work load has doubled mental health starts to set in and at the same time menopause starts as women don't know if they are coming or going and need support from managers and work colleagues.

- We request that the National Women's Committee work with the NEC to negotiate with employers to alleviate the impact that gendered abusive and coercive behaviour has on women in the workplace in terms of number of working days lost, impact on performance and productivity and higher employee turnover.
- We ask National Women's Committee to work with the NEC to campaign vigorously for workplaces to adopt a domestic abuse policy

City of Wolverhampton Local Government

Reasonable Adjustments and Returning to Work after Covid-19

There is evidence that women are more prone to experience long-Covid and growing evidence that long-Covid may exacerbate pre-existing conditions such as endometriosis, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and menopause related symptoms.

Conference is concerned about the number of employers who seem to lack knowledge or awareness of long-Covid symptoms let alone that young to middle-aged women are disproportionately vulnerable. There are signs that age-old biases have surfaced and that managers are dismissing persistent symptoms or putting them down to anxiety.

Conference is particularly concerned about anecdotal evidence that some women with hidden disabilities such as endometriosis, and where long-Covid has increased their symptoms, are encountering an unsympathetic attitude from their managers. Rather than talking to staff with long-Covid about possible support or a reasonable adjustment, it seems some managers are rigidly applying sickness absence management procedures. Some disabled women who had formal reasonable adjustments in place in recognition of their disability before the pandemic, and who are now also affected by long-Covid have found that the reasonable adjustment to their working arrangements has come under scrutiny.

Conference is clear that the Equality Act 2010 places a legal requirement on employers to prevent discrimination towards employees on the basis of those employees having underlying conditions lasting 12 months or more that could be classed as a disability.

The legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees did not change during the pandemic and continues to apply as restrictions relax.

In some cases, long-Covid women may find their long-Covid symptoms improve after a few months. However, good employers should still be aware that a member of staff

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is struggling and support them through a reasonable adjustment to their working arrangements or time.

Conference:

- 1) Calls on the National Women's Committee (NWC) to liaise with the National Disabled Members Committee and Service Groups of UNISON to highlight evidence about disabled women workers being denied reasonable adjustments as Covid restrictions lift, and to ensure UNISON's bargaining guidance reflects this problem.
- 2) Asks the NWC to work both within UNISON, with other SOGs, particularly disabled members and with external campaigning bodies (Trade Union and non-trade union alike) to raise awareness of the issues affecting women with long-Covid, and particularly disabled women when they return to their workplace.

National Women's Committee

Menopause as a Trade Union issue

This conference recognises

- UNISON has one million women members – more than two thirds of our union. Women still earn a lot less than men and face sex discrimination and harassment at work. Our members also juggle work and home commitments.
- Those women will ALL experience the menopause at some stage and to some intensity during their working life. This makes the Menopause a Trade Union issue.
- That the menopause changes the way that women are viewed in the workplace. Women are held back from promotion, their work is scrutinised differently and their status as workers is challenged because of their experiences with the menopause.

This conference notes

- The Menopause Experts Group analysed court records and found that there were 16 tribunals that cited menopause last year, up from six in 2019 and just five in 2018, with 20 expected over the course of a full year for 2021 if the rate continued.
- Menopause was mentioned eight times in tribunals in 2017, but has featured 116 times in the first six months of 2021, which is equal to a 25-fold increase. In addition, there have been 43 employment tribunals referencing it since April 2017.

There were also six cases in the last nine months of 2017 compared with 10 in the first six months of 2021

- In October 2019, Acas produced its menopause guidance. It states over 2 million women aged over 50 have difficulties at work due to menopause symptoms. This can lead to a loss of confidence and feelings of stress and anxiety surrounding the ability to do their jobs.

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- Research shows that Black women are not genetically more pre-disposed to suffer adversely, that racism increases the likelihood of a Black woman being mistreated in the workplace when experiencing the menopause.

This conference further notes

- As with any physical or mental condition, knowledge and understanding is key. Whilst it may be a sensitive topic, we have to shine a light on it to create the understanding that all our members need in order to support women in the workplace.
- that every woman will experience different symptoms so employers should not assume all female employees will be suffering from the same symptoms.
- That Black women are more adversely affected across a range of health inequalities, and that Black women facing the menopause are subjected to both racial stereotyping and lack of understanding around the health impact of the menopause.
- Acas include the following tips on how to raise concerns and good practices for employers to help manage the menopause at work:
 - o Create and implement a menopause policy;
 - o Provide awareness training for managers to deal with concerns in a sensitive way;
 - o Create an open and trusted culture within the team;
 - o Make changes where possible such as altering working hours, for example – allow someone to start later if they are struggling with sleep and allow extra breaks to help with concentration levels;
 - o Implement low-cost environmental changes such as providing a desk fan to help with hot flushes.

This conference believes that

- The menopause is unavoidable for women who form most of our union.
- The menopause is no joke but is used as a joke at best against women experiencing it, in general to hold menopausal women down in the workplace, and at worst to exit older women from the workforce.
- That women past the child-bearing stage of their lives have a wealth of experience and skill to bring to the workplace and should be valued rather than ridiculed.
- That our Trades Union brothers and sisters regularly represent members suffering aspects of the menopause without fully understanding the physiological, neurological, psychological, and emotional impacts of the menopause.

This conference resolves

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- 1) To write to branches for them to send a motion on Menopause as a Trade Union issue into National Delegate Conference;
- 2) To undertake national research the experiences of women within UNISON who are having or have had negative workplace experiences with menopause as a contributory cause, and to publish that research as part of a national campaign to understand Menopause as a Trade Union issue.
- 3) To call on NDC to create a national policy, with a mandatory training programme for officers and stewards on how to support women experiencing the menopause in the workplace.
- 4) To call on NDC to make lobbying Government to make menopause policies a legal requirement as part of Equalities legislation a key part of the national work plan.

North West Region

Tackling systemic misogyny in the workplace

This conference notes that the horrific murder of Sarah Everard potentially could have and should have been prevented. Evidence published after the murder trial highlighted an extremely concerning level of misogyny within the Metropolitan Police. It was reported that there was a systemic failure to challenge and eliminate sexist attitudes and behaviours towards women of all backgrounds. Although we cannot say for sure, it is in the realms of probability that this culture emboldened the perpetrator to increase his antisocial behaviours towards women, which ultimately led to Sarah's tragic death.

This conference believes that allowing misogyny to go unchallenged within the workplace, contributes to the wider societal issues and negative attitudes that women experience on a daily basis. If a woman is black, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+), young, or a combination of all four, these experiences can be even worse.

This conference gives us an opportunity to ensure that UNISON, through the work of our National Women's Committee, is able to highlight this workplace issue, so that women can be better supported to lead safe and fulfilled lives without fear from men. We also believe that the issue of misogyny can only be overcome with the involvement of men. They will have a significant role to play in reducing misogynistic attitudes and this will require engagement and education. This conference recognises and applauds the efforts of organisations such as the White Ribbon Campaign to change the attitudes of men towards women.

This conference calls for the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Develop educational resources aimed at tackling misogyny within the workplace that can be utilised by Regions and Branches.
- 2) Liaise with other National Self Organised Group (SOG) Committee's to ensure women of all backgrounds are truly represented within the educational material produced.
- 3) Engage in a dialogue with Labour Link to raise the profile of misogyny within the workplace within the political arena.

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- 4) Work with the Police and Justice Service Group to further promote the need to challenge misogyny within the workplace.
- 5) Link in with the White Ribbon Campaign and promote joint working in tackling misogynistic attitudes that can ultimately lead to violence against women of all backgrounds and characteristics.

South Tyneside Local Government

Campaign for a Gender Equal Economy

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed our problematic economy, particularly its impact on women. UNISON Northern Region women's network recognise that the majority of all care has been provided by women throughout the pandemic. We also recognise that women have been disproportionately impacted by the economic fallout from covid-19, for example by redundancies arising from covid-19, at least in part due to caring responsibilities. We have also seen the rise in poverty over recent years. The hardship our members are facing is clear through the significant increase in demand for our There For You fund, and women are bearing the brunt of this.

We are calling for a re-prioritisation of what matters most, to create a Gender Equal Economy. We call on National Women's Committee to support our campaign.

A gender equal economy is an economy which prioritises care – ensuring everyone has time to care, as well as time free from caring, and that care is valued for its essential role in our economy. This is essential for tackling the gender pay gap and achieving gender equality.

Creating a gender equal economy requires:

- Respect and understanding of people's multiple roles as carers alongside their roles as paid workers.
- Investment in adult and child social care services and jobs, including free universal childcare provision year-round and on a full-time basis.
- Good quality pay and conditions for care workers.
- Re-envisioning what we mean a successful economy to recognise the economic value of unpaid care work to the wider economy.
- Ensuring the impact of all economic policies on equalities is properly assessed and addressed.
- Investment in public services to ensure quality housing, public transport etc are available to all.

We ask National Women's Committee to support our campaign and to work with Labour Link to progress this.

Northern Region

The Impact of Covid-19 on Disabled Women

Cuts have been disproportionately impacting disabled women for some time and this has been exacerbated since the COVID-19 crisis, with a huge number of those who

2022 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

have died and become ill from COVID being disabled. Universal credit has had a devastating impact on disabled people, especially women as they are facing double discrimination. Women often take the role of carer, caring for child and/or responsibilities running a household, which is made even more difficult during a pandemic when disabled. This can lead to increased stress and mental ill-health, as well as worsening disability symptoms. In addition to this, women often work in the 5 C employment areas; being paid much less per hour than others, with employers using the crisis as a reason to cut terms and conditions or reduce safe working practices.

Eastern Region Women's Committee calls on the Women's Conference to:

- Encourage and help our regions and branches to train stewards to enable them to support disabled members further following the huge impact of COVID-19.
- Ask National Women's Committee to work with all the relevant committees to lobby for changes to the unfair Universal Credit system, using case studies of poor treatment where possible.
- Work with the National Disabled Members Committee on their work related to working from home as a reasonable adjustment and how this disproportionately impacts our disabled women members.
- To contact our disabled women members to identify what they might need and to act on this accordingly.

Eastern Region

Fight the Police and Justice Bill

Conference, the appalling Police and Justice Bill is upon us.

This affects all of us and it's not just about XR protesting on the M14.

The Bill will mean that –

- Women would not be allowed to protest against police sexual harassment.
- Disabled women will not be allowed to be part of DPAC (Disabled People Against Cuts) and protest about the cut in universal credit.
- Black women will not be allowed to protest against laws that discriminate against people of colour.
- Those from the LGBTQ+ community will not be allowed to protest against unfair treatment.
- This union will be forbidden to protest about low wages, bad conditions.

We must remember that if the Suffrage movement had not fought against the government of the day, women may never have had the vote.

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As activists we will not be allowed to protest about low pay, fire and rehire, privatisation of the NHS. Every little thing that is central to our members lives we will have to remain silent on.

Many feel that this is a step towards a type of dystopian government control.

It is too late now to lobby your MPs but we must continue to protest.

We can still find ways to make this bill impossible to work, for example, hold a 1 women silent protest.

Conference calls on all delegates to:

- 1) Work with UNISON branches and regional offices to resist all attempts to prevent legitimate protest.
- 2) Campaign nationally to get the bill repealed.

Eastern Region

Make Misogyny a Hate Crime

At work, in schools, in private life, 'jokes' about women and girls often pass as small talk or just 'banter'. However, when the word Woman is replaced by gay / black / Jew it immediately becomes much more serious, it is prejudice.

As women we are taught from a young age about 'appropriate clothes' or covering up. Told not to be out after dark, to avoid certain places at night-time. Not to walk the dog alone on particular routes or at all. Don't get drunk as it makes us more vulnerable, stay together when you're out with friends. Learn self-defence, carry your keys in your hand ready to use as a weapon. What were our brothers taught from a young age? What boundaries were they subject to? What behaviours and thinking were rewarded? Were they taught any of what we were as women? Were they encouraged to see us as equals? To speak up against sexism when they saw and heard it?

Due to some recent high-profile crimes against women, many of us have started to fight back. To stand against this victim blaming culture we all live and work in. Demanding change from all parts of society; from a dysfunctional police force, when the woman in charge describes a rapist and murderer amongst the ranks as a "bad apple". Whose officers took photographs on their phones of the bodies of two murdered sisters, and shared them with friends.

The UN Defines gender-based violence in the following way: "The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence that is violence directed against a woman because she is a woman, or, that affects women disproportionately".

From year end March 2017 to year end March 2019: 77% (274) victims of domestic homicide were female. 96% of suspects were male.

The crime survey for England & Wales: 151,000 including 144,000 women were victims of rape or attempted rape in the last year for which figures are available.

2022 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

59,000 rapes were reported to the police. In the same year, 1,439 people were actually convicted of rape. The lowest number since figures started being released in 2014/2015.

A recent YouGov poll found 7 out of 10 women experienced some form of sexual harassment in public. 1 in 5 has faced indecent exposure.

What UNISON women want is:

- For the NEC to work with members and regions to gather information to establish a more accurate picture of the problem. This could be done using a range of mediums. The outcomes of this should be used to map the problem, identify ways UNISON can help and inform priorities for branches and National UNISON agenda.
- We ask the union and NEC to campaign for all members and employers to highlight misogyny and the ripple effect. To educate and encourage members and employers to challenge misogynistic language and behaviour and make it socially unacceptable. Pressure employers to take such language more seriously and offer training in challenging sexism in the workplace.
- We ask the NEC to draft a motion with regional support from the Women's Regional committees to enable unions to lobby the government and political leaders to make misogyny a hate crime.

Bolton Metro

Make uniforms fit for Menopause

Employers are using COVID as an excuse to avoid addressing the menopause.

UNISON and the TUC have made great strides in breaking down the menopause stigma, however, we feel that this work has now been majorly overshadowed by COVID-19 and employers are once again disregarding the impact the menopause can have on Women, their partners and their families. We find ourselves almost back to square one - powerless in obtaining the rights to work in a healthy and dignified environment.

Whilst every NHS worker across the country is going over and above for our beloved NHS, COVID writes itself firmly into our history books and women across the UK are being left behind to suffer.

Women make up 77% of the workforce in the NHS but research suggests that women are still the minority in senior roles. Without women to influence change, behaviour and culture there is a clear lack of adequate facilities and lack of menopause awareness across the NHS.

Uniforms are just one example demonstrating this. They are made of thick heavy cotton which is uncomfortable, rough and unpleasant in the best conditions. With the removal of fans and air circulation units on wards; the extreme heat, coupled with hot flashes and an added layer of PPE is unbearable.

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Conference calls for:

- An urgent review of women's uniforms
- An introduction of seasonal uniforms to allow for lighter cotton for periods of hot weather or at times individual women are struggling with symptoms, for uniforms which don't reveal sweat patches.
- Adequate and in-depth research around PPE for women

Cymru/Wales Region

Menopause is not a sickness

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for most women. Commonly known as 'the change', it refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months and a person has reached the end of their reproductive life.

It is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe. On average, women continue to experience symptoms for four years after their last period, but around 10 per cent of women continue to experience symptoms for up to 12 years after their last period.

Physical symptoms associated with the onset of the perimenopause can include: hot flushes, palpitations, night sweats, insomnia and sleep disturbances, fatigue, headaches, joint aches, dry skin and skin irritation, increased perspiration during the day, dry eyes, hair loss, urinary problems, vaginal dryness/itching/discomfort, irregular and/or heavy, painful periods, clots and flooding. There may also be associated psychological symptoms including: depression, anxiety, panic attacks, poor concentration, changes to mood, problems with memory, loss of confidence.

According to the aging workforce study 47% females are aged 45 and over – there is currently little, or no support given to a woman as she makes this transition in life.

Specialist advice and support is essential to maintaining attendance at work. Positive Occupational Health intervention can offer managers a better understanding of their staff complexities, providing additional support for members who are experiencing menopause or living with a partner suffering during this time.

We would like to note that the menopause is not a sickness, it's a natural part of a women ageing, however it is one that can cause temporary and even longer-term disabling events on the individual. The word sickness sends the wrong message when applied to symptoms of the menopause.

This conference calls for:

- Employers to take menopause seriously and have detailed menopause policies.
- Employers to provide a specialist consultant within Occupational Health.
- An additional criteria to the recording of absenteeism to make allowances for episodes of menopause related absence without it being recorded as 'sickness'.

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- Employers to make improvements for members to access flexible working opportunities, have more appropriate uniforms and be able to access breaks during work times (circumstances allowing) if there is a sudden onset of uncontrollable symptoms.
- Employers to give women back their dignity. We demand to be listened to and treated fairly with recognition for natural but sometimes debilitating life transitions.

Cymru/Wales Region

Domestic Abuse 'Access for all'

This Women's Conference is appalled that two women are killed each week from Domestic Abuse and many women and children are stuck in abusive situations due to the fact that they cannot access a refuge space.

The reduction in refuge provision for women and children throughout the UK is not only adding to the death of women and children each week it is also creating access problems for women and children.

It is not right that a woman should have to give up her employment to be able to access a safe space in refuge. This is due to the high supported accommodation costs which leaves it an unaffordable choice for women and children in abusive situations. Whilst housing benefit covers some of the cost if you are working this can still leave a large sum of rent for the refuge space to be paid.

It is also not right that due to cuts Women and their children sometimes have to move across the whole of the UK to access refuge spaces and many employers are reluctant to keep jobs open for staff unless they are a national company that can move staff. This leaves the woman having to access benefits when they should be able to continue to work whilst in a place of safety. Whilst this is sometimes needed for safety reasons this is not always the case.

A woman should not have to give up her home or her employment due to abuse there should be funding available to ensure that a woman and her children can be safe and be able to remain in their employment.

This conference calls for:

- The NEC and UNISON Central to challenge Government on the Domestic abuse issue and push access for all.
- UNISON to set up a campaign about 'Access for all' in refuges
- Branches talk to and challenge their own Local Authority, supported accommodation provision, to provide funding for refuge spaces for working women to access

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- Branches to write to their Local MP's/MS's/MSP's to push for funding to be provided for working women in refuges

Cymru/Wales Region

Not sufficiently clear

England's Women Footballers

This conference recognises and abhors the racism directed at the England Men's team following defeat in the final of UEFA Euro 2020 competition held in 2021. This conference supports the continued taking of the knee in the English game as a valid human rights action.

This conference believes that while the abuse against the men's team was rightly widely reported, abuse of women in football is unrecognised at a national level, unreported but is equally unacceptable. We believe that women in football face gender discrimination across the board, and that Black women in football face both gender and race discrimination daily, and that this prevents their rise in the football world.

This conference recognises that while the men's team squad for the qualifiers for Euro 2021 had 14 Black players, the last women's squad, for the SheBelieves Cup in March 2020...just Parris and Stokes.

This conference believes that

- Divisions within our society have been created by years of cuts to public service budgets under the guise of the Austerity Agenda
- The Austerity Agenda affects women harder than men, and Black women the hardest.

To call on the National Women's Committee to work on anti-racism agenda to prevent Gender and discrimination against women.

North West Region

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