



## **RECORD OF DECISIONS**

# **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference**

**2022 Virtual National Women's Conference  
Decisions**

- M1**            **Mentoring and Developing Grassroots Women of Unison**
- M2**            **PART TIME EMPLOYEES AND PROGRESSION AT WORK –  
A WOMENS' ISSUE**
- M3**            **A Voice for Part Time Workers**
- M4**            **Don't forget about us when we are not in the room: Black  
women getting active in UNISON**
- M5**            **Proportionality within UNISON**
- M6**            **NEC Election of UNISON President June 2021**
- M7**            **NEVER FORGET TO LIFT AS YOU RISE**
- M8**            **Supporting carers in the workplace**
- M11**           **Home Working And The Impact On Women**
- M12**           **The Effect of Covid-19 on Women's Lives**
- M13**           **Long Covid – dealing with the unequal impact on women**
- M14**           **The Impact of Covid-19 on Women**
- M15**           **The Impact of Covid-19 on Domestic Abuse**
- M16**           **Violence Against Disabled Women and Domestic Abuse**
- M17**           **AN END TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**
- M18**           **Feminist Recovery Plan Relaunch**
- M19**           **WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT**
- M20**           **Disabled Women Paying the Price of Punitive Government  
Policy**
- M21**           **Sexual harassment – more work to do**
- M22**           **Stalking – Strengthen the Laws to Protect Women in the  
Workplace**
- M23**           **For safety – end support for the 'Nordic model'**
- M24**           **Menopause and Black women**
- M25**           **A Buffer Zone To Protect Patients And Workers**
- M26**           **Decriminalise and defend the right to choose**
- M27**           **Single Parents Rights Campaign: Supporting Single Parent  
being added to the Equality Act 2010 as a protected  
characteristic**
- M28**           **Equality for trans women – louder and prouder!**
- Composite**   **Childcare**  
**A**
- Composite**   **CEDAW**  
**B**

**2022 Virtual National Women's Conference  
Decisions**

**Motions**

**1. Mentoring and Developing Grassroots Women of Unison**

**Carried as Amended: 1.1, 1.2**

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, and this would particularly benefit young women, trans women, disabled women and Black women who are traditionally less well represented at branch level.

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.

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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
  
5. To work with National Black Members Committee to encourage our Black Women and our Young Black Women to become more active within UNISON at all levels.

### **2. PART TIME EMPLOYEES AND PROGRESSION AT WORK – A WOMENS' ISSUE**

**Fell**

### **3. A Voice for Part Time Workers**

**Carried**

A Voice for Women 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

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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

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

**Carried**

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 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

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

### 5. Proportionality within UNISON

**Carried as Amended: 5.1**

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).

National Women's committee supports proportionality in all the policy it creates and in previous years supported a motion brought by North West women's conference to do specific work to increase the participation of Black women in UNISON. It is important that we recognise and reaffirm in Branches that motions passed by conference are policy as much as the items listed in the Rule Book and we should all take steps to ensure Branches are implementing the actions passed at national conference that promote inclusivity particularly.

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

**2022 Virtual National Women's Conference  
Decisions**

**6. NEC Election of UNISON President June 2021**

**Fell**

**7. NEVER FORGET TO LIFT AS YOU RISE**

**Carried as Amended**

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. We all bear a personal responsibility to affect change in this area and therefore must consider this in electing representatives to committees such as Labour Link, regional committees, council and the various other regional groups we participate in, urging colleagues to vote to ensure proportionality as defined with in our union rules, even where it is not

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

explicitly stated, ultimately encouraging the union structures to reflect all of its membership.

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.

### 8. Supporting carers in the workplace

**Carried**

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.



## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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.

### **11. Home Working And The Impact On Women**

**Carried**

"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.

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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.

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."

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

**Carried**

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.

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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-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

- Recognising the unequal burden on women as unpaid care givers balancing this with paid work
- 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.

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

**Carried**

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

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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.

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.

### **14. The Impact of Covid-19 on Women**

**Fell**

### **15. The Impact of Covid-19 on Domestic Abuse**

**Fell**

### **16. Violence Against Disabled Women and Domestic Abuse**

**Carried as Amended: 16.1**

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.

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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.

Conference recognises that there is an urgent need for sustainable long-term funding for specialist domestic abuse services, including specialist services provided by and for disabled, Black, LGBT+ and migrant women.

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.

Research has found that:

- Disabled women are more likely to be subjected to abuse or violence than non-disabled women.
- 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.
- 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:

- 1) Seek to ensure the needs of disabled women are considered when the committee is consulted on matters relating to violence against women.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Promote UNISON's guidance 'Domestic violence and abuse: a trade union issue' and encourage branches to negotiate workplace policies on domestic abuse.

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

- 4) Work with the NEC to lobby the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to provide sustainable funding for domestic abuse services, so that refuges and community-based support are available and accessible to all women experiencing domestic abuse

### 17. AN END TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

**Carried**

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:

- More than four-fifths of women have been subjected to sexual harassment.
- 1 in two women have been sexually harassed at work.
- 4 out of 5 women who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace didn't feel able to report it to their employer.
- Almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- 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 Womens' Committee to:

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

1. 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.
2. Work with Regional women's committees and branches to encourage employers to become White Ribbon UK accredited.
3. Work with UNISON Learning and Organising Services to develop and provide specific training for activists on sexual harassment in the workplace.
4. 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.
5. Work with the relevant structures within UNISON to support the principle that misogyny be recognised as a hate crime.

### **18. Feminist Recovery Plan Relaunch**

**Carried**

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.

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.

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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.



## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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

### 19. WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT

**Carried**

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:

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

- 1) The National Womens 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.

### **20. Disabled Women Paying the Price of Punitive Government Policy**

**Carried**

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:

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

- 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.

### **21. Sexual harassment – more work to do**

#### **Carried as Amended: 21.1**

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: -

- Introducing a mandatory duty on employers to protect their staff from sexual harassment at work.
- Introducing explicit protections for employees from harassment by third parties, for example customers or clients.
- Considering extending employment tribunal time limits from three to six months.
- 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.

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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.

Conference therefore welcomes the UK government's announcement on 15 November that it would be ratifying Convention 190. This will require the Government to draw up the UK's official Instrument of Ratification to deposit with the ILO. The Instrument, which should be drawn up by the Government in consultation with trade unions and employers, will need to set out the UK's plan for implementing the necessary laws, workplace policies and enforcement measures to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work.

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

**2022 Virtual National Women's Conference  
Decisions**

- 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 effective implementation of Convention 190, working with the TUC and other organisations as appropriate
  
- e) Work with Labour Link to raise the campaigns in points a) and d) with the Labour party

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

**Carried**

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:

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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.

Stalking is a form of assault which can leave victims traumatised for many years afterwards.

Stalking can be part of domestic abuse and is sometimes the first step in a process that can lead to rape and murder.

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:

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) 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.

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

### 23. For safety – end support for the ‘Nordic model’

Carried

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:

- 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

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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.

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.

### 24. Menopause and Black women

**Carried as Amended: 24.1**

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.

Research shows that racism increases the likelihood of a Black woman being mistreated in the workplace when experiencing the menopause. 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.



## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

Black women are more adversely affected across a range of health inequalities and black women facing the menopause are subjected to both racial stereotyping and lack of understanding around the health impact of the menopause.

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.
- 4) To encourage all NWC delegates to work with their regional black members and regional women's committee to ask the National Women's Committee to lobby the Government to make menopause policies a legal requirement as part of Equalities legislation a key part of the national work plan.

### **25. A Buffer Zone To Protect Patients And Workers**

**Carried**

"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.

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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:

That a woman has a fundamental right to choose regarding termination of their pregnancy;

That those attending appropriate healthcare have the right to do this without fear or intimidation;

That those who work in services have the right to go to work without fear or intimidation;

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:

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.

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.

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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....”

A PSPO is therefore the quickest way forward but will need support from a number of sectors.

This Conference asks National Women’s Committee to:

- 1) 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.
  
- 2) 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.
  
- 3) To join the British Pregnancy Advice Services' Campaign “Back Off”, that campaigns for Buffer Zones and inputs into community groups. <https://back-off.org/>."

### **26. Decriminalise and defend the right to choose**

**Carried**

This Conference notes:

- 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
- That this threatens the Roe vs Wade ruling of 1973 that made abortion legal in the US.
- 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.

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

- 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:

- Any attack on abortion rights anywhere in the world is an attack on us all.
- The Texas ruling gives confidence to anyone who wants to see women and people forced to the back streets.
- The right to abortion is under severe attack in other countries around the world such as Hungary and Poland.
- 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.
- We cannot be complacent in the UK - abortion is still a criminal offence on the statute book and that has to be removed.
- 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.
- Abortion Rights UK plays a pivotal role in defending abortion rights and fighting for safe, free, legal abortions.
- 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:

- 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.

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

**Carried**

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

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

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

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

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

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

### 28. Equality for trans women – louder and prouder!

**Carried**

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.

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:

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

- 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:

- 1) Explore ways to increase the visibility of UNISON's work to promote and support equality for trans women
- 2) Promote Trans ally training widely within the women's group
- 3) Encourage women members and branch groups to urge employers to join the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme if they are not already members
- 4) 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
- 5) Continue to support the reform of the GRA

**Composite A.      Childcare**

## 2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions

### Carried

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.

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. 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. 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. The provision of affordable, quality childcare is crucial to tackling the Gender Pay Gap. 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 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.



## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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.

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

- 1) Lobby, including a lobby of MPs, 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 with partners organisations like Pregnant then Screwed about the challenges they are facing with childcare and seeking to consult on their views regarding good quality, affordable and accessible childcare.

**Composite B. CEDAW**

**Carried**

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

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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.

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.

Conference recognises that CEDAW 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.

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.

Countries that have ratified CEDAW 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.

## **2022 Virtual National Women's Conference Decisions**

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 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.

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 therefore asks the National Women's Committee to:

**2022 Virtual National Women's Conference  
Decisions**

1. Work with the National Executive Council and National Labour Link to develop a comprehensive 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.
  
3. Work with Laos on developing a training and awareness package on CEDAW around the understanding of CEDAW for our lay members.
  
4. National Women's Committee to report back to Women's conference 2023 on progress made