



Service Group Conference 2022

Decisions

12 - 13 June 2022

The Brighton Centre

1. Funding Cuts and Ethnicity Pay Gap in Local Government

Carried as Amended: 1.1

Conference, funding cuts and the government's long-delayed plans to address social inequalities is one of the major causes of in-work poverty experienced by Black Workers and the cause of severe inter-generational inequality in Black communities.

Recent funding increases have not undone £15bn of cuts in central government grants to local authorities between 2010 and 2020, coupled with the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Black community.

Conference also notes that the situation has been exacerbated by the impact of over a decade of austerity, resulting in cuts to equality departments and very low level of recruitment in local government and the public sector.

In 2017, the government committed in its manifesto to “ask” large employers to publish information on their ethnicity pay gaps. In 2020, only 11% of companies had published this information.

The introduction of this important measure is needed to identify the disparities within the workforce and forces employers to be accountable.

UNISON Black workers are committed to addressing issues on racial equality and believe this campaign must be a priority for the local government service group.

This Conference calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Develop an action plan for use in the workplace including a collective bargaining fact sheet for branches to use when tackling racial pay inequality in the workplace
- 2) Encourage branches to make racial pay inequality part of their diversity strategy to engage with employers to publish the information on their ethnicity pay gap
- 3) Where employers already publish their ethnicity pay gap, to encourage branches to use this information to campaign for:
 - a) Improvements in progression
 - b) Inclusive recruitment practices
 - c) An end to low pay, particularly on the privatised contracts where a higher proportion of members are Black, work longer hours and are paid less.

2. Mandatory Vaccinations

Carried as Amended: 2.1

Conference welcomes the UK government's U-turn on mandatory vaccinations, and condemns the government for creating the problem in the first place. Conference welcomes UNISON's role in contributing to the government's change in policy.

Conference opposes any further push to extend mandatory vaccination into social care services in England. UNISON is strongly supportive of the vaccination programme as a means of tackling coronavirus and making social care settings safer. But UNISON believes this should be implemented by boosting trust and confidence in vaccination and through adopting our approach of persuasion and not coercion. The responsible approach is to provide the reliable information from trusted sources.

Forcing the vaccination on care workers has had, and continues to have, three devastating impacts:

- 1) It has undermined the roll out of vaccination by undermining trust, becoming a huge distraction from the task of boosting confidence in the vaccination programme;
- 2) Tragically, thousands of care workers have walked away from the sector, losing their skill and experience, when they could have stayed and been persuaded to take the vaccine. This impact has been particularly devastating for Black care workers;
- 3) Most damaging of all, it has made acute staffing shortages even worse, seriously damaging the quality of care given to care recipients.

A UNISON survey of more than 4000 care workers published in 2021 provided clear evidence this would happen. UNISON repeatedly warned the government of these impacts, in the media, in meetings with the Department of Health and Social Care and in writing. UNISON was joined in opposing the move by many local authorities and social care employer groups.

Conference applauds the huge amount of work done by UNISON branches and regions to support those care workers and the wider social care workforce, such as adult social workers in England, who needed our assistance regarding mandatory vaccination. The union has received many requests for support from social care members and the union has done everything possible to support those members. The national union has provided detailed guidance, briefings and support and represented members' views on a subject which has received significant national media attention.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- a) Campaign for the reinstatement of any members in the Service Group who were dismissed as a result of mandatory vaccination regulations;

- b) Continue to argue against mandatory vaccination and to support members, with a particular focus on protecting continued employment wherever this is possible;
- c) At the appropriate time, provide detailed evidence to a public inquiry on the devastatingly negative impact of mandatory vaccination on social care;
- d) Provide advice and guidance for branches to help them convince local councils not to adopt punitive mandatory vaccination policies for their wider social care workforce;
- e) Resist any moves to reintroduce or extend mandatory vaccination to children's social care or other local government run or commissioned service areas;
- f) Work closely with other service groups on overlapping campaigns regarding mandatory vaccination;
- g) Resist any moves to introduce mandatory vaccination for social care workers in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland;
- h) Through Labour Link, campaign for the Labour Party to strengthen its position and oppose mandatory vaccination;
- i) Consider the option of running a campaign calling for compensation for workers, within the local government service group, who lost their employment within the social care sector as a result of mandatory vaccination requirements.

3. Covid and Long Covid

Carried as Amended: 3.1

Conference notes that UNISON members in councils, schools and across local government have been on the front line of the fight against Covid and have been instrumental in ensuring that vital public services could continue during the pandemic. This has meant they have been more exposed than most to the physical and mental impacts of Covid.

As at December 2021, Office for National Statistics data showed that 1.3 million people in the UK were experiencing self-reported long Covid. People working in health, social care, teaching or education were included in those greater affected, along with those who had an activity-limiting health condition or disability. Education staff are the second most likely group to have long Covid, after healthcare workers.

Separate figures from the Labour Force Survey in 2021 revealed that 645,000 workers reported having a work-related illness caused or made worse by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. This includes long Covid, stress, anxiety and depression. The data also shows that nearly 100,000 workers reported catching Covid-19 at work in 2020/21 - far more than the 32,000 cases officially reported by employers to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

These figures make clear that Covid and long Covid have been, and continue to be, massive threats to local government workers' health, safety and physical and mental well-being.

Conference notes that even during lockdowns, huge numbers of our members could not work from home, and continued to provide services in workplaces and in our communities, putting them more at risk. School support workers kept schools open even when teachers were teaching online lessons from home; refuse workers continued to travel in cramped vehicles; social workers and housing workers continued to visit people's homes. Many members contracted Covid, and Conference believes that Covid should be officially recognised as an occupational disease.

Conference believes that those with long Covid should not be subject to normal sickness absence processes and triggers.

The Equality Act makes clear that a person is disabled if they have a mental or physical impairment that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months or more and which has a substantial impact on their normal day to day activities. Conference believes that for many of our members, their experience of long Covid would already make them a disabled person under the Equality Act and therefore entitled to protections and, in particular, to reasonable adjustments, such as changes to sickness absence triggers.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Support UNISON's work through the TUC's membership of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) to recognise Covid-19 as an occupational disease including calling for government-funded research into work-related exposures, risk and disability;
- 2) While awaiting any IIAC decision on prescribing long Covid as an occupational disease, campaign through Labour Link and other political routes to promote the need for long Covid to be recognised as an occupational disease and to get political support for the campaign;
- 3) Endorse the campaign agreed at 2021 Disabled Members Conference, "for the government and employers to recognise that people with long Covid can be defined as disabled under the Equality Act if the condition has a substantial impact on their ability to do normal day to day activities that is expected to last 12 months or more";
- 4) Circulate and promote UNISON's Guide to Supporting Members with Long Covid to branches and regions;
- 5) Ask sectors, regions and branches to raise this with employers and employers' organisations as a priority in ongoing negotiations, so as to seek to get it agreed and included in relevant policies and procedures;

- 6) Continue to campaign for measures that will reduce the transmission and reduce the risk of catching Covid and therefore the chances of getting Long Covid. This to include provision of free testing, support to self-isolate including full sick pay and for workplace ventilation and filtration;
- 7) Campaign for workplaces to adopt “The Covid-19 Safety Pledge” and use it as a tool to develop Covid safety measures in all our workplaces. The Pledge includes the following commitments.
 - a) We will assess our physical environment and working practices according to health and safety law including risk assessments, in order to ensure that they are designed to safeguard against the spread of infection
 - b) We will abide by best public health advice and ensure that all employees who test positive are both asked and given adequate support to stay at home and self-isolate

4. New Ways of Working in Local Government

Carried as Amended: 4.1

Conference recognises that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, UNISON members in local government have seen a dramatic change in how and where they work.

According to the Office for National Statistics, in the UK 36% of the employed population did some work at home in 2020. UNISON’s 2020 equalities survey found that 40% of members who continued working during the pandemic worked from home.

With the easing of Covid restrictions and transition into a post-pandemic society, workers expect change. Almost 9 in 10 workers told researchers for the October 2021 Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and Work Foundation report ‘Making hybrid inclusive – key priorities for policymakers’, that they don’t want to return to pre-Covid working patterns. Many employers are also planning to keep flexible, hybrid and remote working as a permanent option for staff, with some employers shutting a proportion of their offices for good.

Though the terms have become synonymous during the pandemic, flexible working means more than simply working at home. It can mean having predictable or fixed hours, working as a job-share, working flexitime, term-time only hours or compressed hours. Some UNISON members cannot access all these options because of the work that they do, and it should not be assumed that working from home or hybrid working is appropriate for everyone. But equally it should not be assumed that certain categories of workers cannot benefit from home or hybrid working, and such workers still deserve careful consideration in the design and provision of flexible working options.

In a recent report by the TUC (Union reps' experiences of flexible working and parental leave) it was found that 20% stated that it got harder to access flexitime during the pandemic. Increasingly, we are seeing examples of employers saying that homeworking is not compatible with flexitime. Homeworking or hybrid policies are being produced that explicitly remove flexitime or restrict its application. Notably, whilst employers may be willing to see greater flexibility of hours in the day when work can be done, that is being restricted to 35 hours worked in any one week or 7 hours in any one day (when the contractual week is 35 hours). The opportunity to accrue deficit or surplus hours from week to week and to take flexi leave is being restricted. This is often rooted in management distrust of workers.

These changes did not start because of Covid-19 but were greatly accelerated by it. Even before the pandemic, many local authorities were already moving to a culture of hot-desking and remote or home working - with offices being treated as drop-in 'hubs'.

Some of this change has been positive - giving workers more choice over how they work, where they work and the days or hours they work. Technology has also given them more choice on how they communicate and interact with their colleagues and share or access information. This has allowed workers to better juggle their work/life balance and to tackle outdated workplace cultures like presenteeism. But there are negativities too. Some employers have pushed remote working and office closures to save money - without properly consulting staff or thinking through the implications of such big changes. For many UNISON members, working from home is not an option due to personal circumstances, and they should not be forced to use their own home as an office.

This has happened against the backdrop of an ever-shrinking local government workforce (especially in our schools). UNISON is clear that technology and new ways of working can never compensate for the loss of hundreds of thousands of local government workers since 2010. This has been compounded by higher demands on remaining staff and a growing recruitment and retention crisis driven by low pay in local government.

The large-scale shift to flexible working carries huge benefits to some workers but also some risks. Employers must acknowledge that a "one size does fits all" approach will not work. Changes must begin with proper engagement and consultation of staff and unions about flexible working – giving UNISON members a real choice in how, where and when they work.

Conference calls upon the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Conduct a survey to gather intelligence on what flexible working options are being offered by local government employers - and determine what 'best practice' looks like;

- 2) Campaign for hybrid working options that offer members flexibility and work-life balance, while protecting members' rights at work and without any financial detriment, and retaining office-based workplaces for those who need them due to the requirements of their professions or personal circumstances;
- 3) Promote UNISON's bargaining guidance on home and flexible working, and ensure that sectors, regions and branches include workloads, stress and mental health in flexible working negotiations;
- 4) Work with sectors, regions and branches to challenge employers who use flexible working as a smokescreen for cutting costs – or to justify any reduction in the workforce;
- 5) Consider how our approach to organising needs to change in the light of these new ways of working.

5. Sexual Harassment, Still Going Strong!

Carried

Conference is concerned about the extent of sexual harassment in workplaces and that there are no signs that it is decreasing. Far from it. There is evidence that the requirement to work from home during the pandemic led to online sexual harassment becoming more prevalent. Local government service group workplaces are no exception to this worrying trend.

Sexual harassment can have a devastating impact, often leading to ill-health and work-related stress, affecting both work performance and personal life. It can leave victims powerless, ashamed, hopeless and scared.

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.

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.

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. However, the changes to the law are needed now. Conference recognises that UNISON will need 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.

In the meantime, there is also a lot that local government employers and branches could do now to raise awareness about sexual harassment and to address it. The tone needs to be set from the top – leaders, elected or otherwise, are responsible for the culture of an organisation. UNISON's National Women's SOG has produced excellent materials to help raise awareness of sexual harassment and help victims

have the confidence to seek help from their union. There is also guidance to negotiate policies with employers. These materials should be promoted and used more widely across the service group.

Ensuring that a good anti-sexual harassment policy is in place in all local government service group workplaces will help towards eradicating any sex discriminatory practices and could contribute to gender pay gap action plans. It will also help to protect our Black, LGBT+, disabled and younger members in local government workplaces as too often the sexual harassment can be linked with other forms of discrimination.

Conference calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Promote UNISON's bargaining guidance on sexual harassment widely in the service group;
- 2) Encourage branches in the service group to use the guidance to negotiate, or review, sexual harassment policies with employers.

7. Trans Equality in Local Government – Louder and Prouder!

Carried

The toxic debate ignited by the United Kingdom government's consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act underlined the importance of our union, including branches in the local government service group, supporting and representing our trans members effectively

Attacks on trans rights have escalated further in the past year. There has been a sustained attack on Stonewall's trans inclusive Diversity Champions programme, which some employers in the local government service group are members of, and repeated false claims that Stonewall is misinterpreting the Equality Act's protected characteristic of gender reassignment in its advice to organisations.

The tactics being used, particularly the vilification of trans women, by those campaigning to roll back the existing rights of trans people, including 'gender critical' and anti-trans groups, 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.

There is also growing evidence that the concerted international campaign against trans people is linked to far right and religious-right groups. Targeting a minority, and spreading false information to provoke hatred and distrust by preying on people's fears, are classic far right recruitment tactics.

Conference acknowledges that Trans members in the service group may be experiencing discrimination and transphobia and/or feeling that their workplace is not a safe place to disclose their gender identity.

Conference therefore recognises the need for our union, including the local government service group, to become more visible and more vocal – louder and prouder - in supporting and promoting Trans equality.

This must include the Service Group Executive continuing to encourage the negotiation of inclusive language in local government agreements and policies, and of inclusive practices and procedures, across our local government workplaces, but there are some practical steps that branches can take alongside this.

Some workplaces in the service group already use pronouns on name badges, ID cards and email signatures, but not many. If more did, this would help alleviate the awkward questions that some Trans and non-binary members can face on a day-to-day basis, and also allow other members to show their understanding of the importance of respecting people's pronouns. Conference therefore welcomes the UNISON 'Why pronouns are important' factsheet which can be used by branches to raise these issues with employers.

Some of our Trans and non-binary members also work in contact centres or regularly speak to service users by phone as part of their jobs. They can face upsetting assumptions about their gender identity, including hostility and confrontation. Similarly, Trans and non-binary service users can face unintentional misgendering on the phone from some staff. Conference therefore welcomes the guidance being produced by the National LGBT+ Committee on the best practice words and phrases for staff to use when dealing with people on the phone, which can then be used to assist in the training of call taking staff and by individual members as a learning resource.

Conference therefore calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to work with the National LGBT+ Committee and other parts of the union as appropriate to:

- 1) Explore ways to increase the strength and visibility of UNISON's work to promote Trans equality in the service group;
- 2) Urge branches to promote the fact sheet 'Why pronouns are important' and to ask employers to adopt a policy that allows all staff to have their pronouns on name badges, ID cards and email signatures;
- 3) Encourage branches to urge employers to join the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme if they are not already members;
- 4) Publicise and promote the guidance on best practice in dealing with people on the phone;
- 5) Promote the UNISON fact sheet 'How to be a Trans ally' and trans ally training widely within the service group;

- 6) Encourage members in the service group who have been on the Trans ally training to join the Trans ally's network being set up by the National LGBT+ Committee;
- 7) Promote materials, when available, to help members in the service group to counter the 'gender critical' narrative and provide information on the links between the gender critical movement in the UK and the far right.

8. Make 2022 the Year of Disabled Workers in local government workplaces

Carried

Conference notes that UNISON has declared 2022 the Year of Disabled Workers. This is a great opportunity for local government branches to organise, bargain and campaign on the issues that matter to our disabled members and to increase recruitment and retention as a result.

Local government branches can use 2022 to highlight the experience of our disabled members, the value they bring to our union and to local government workplaces, and to negotiate improved policies with local government employers, including reasonable adjustment passports and disability leave policies.

Conference notes the resources available on the UNISON website, including:

- 1) Reasonable Adjustment Bargaining Guide, including model policy and 'passport';
- 2) Disability Leave bargaining guide and model policy;
- 3) Stewards' guides to representing disabled members and to representing Deaf (BSL user) members;
- 4) Quick Guides to Access to Work and to Reasonable Adjustments;
- 5) Becoming a branch disabled members officer.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- a) Include the Year of Disabled Workers in their ongoing work programme;
- b) Promote the Year of Disabled Workers to regions and branches, encouraging them to include work in this area in their work plans for the year;
- c) Encourage all local government branches to elect a branch Disabled Members Officer and promote UNISON's national training on becoming a branch Disabled Members Officer;

- d) Include reasonable adjustment passports and disability leave policies in the national negotiating agendas with local government employers.

9. Home Working and Reasonable Adjustments

Carried

Conference notes that the Covid-19 pandemic saw a revolution in home working in local government workplaces. Although it is important to remember that home working should be a choice and not compulsory, it has brought benefits for many local government workers in terms of work-life balance. Parents and carers have been better able to combine work and caring responsibilities. For disabled workers, UNISON's own research found that 73% felt they were more productive working from home as they avoided an often exhausting and painful commute and because of their ability to work more flexible hours, with more frequent short breaks.

Now that Covid restrictions have been removed by government, many local government employers are looking at agreeing approaches to hybrid and home working in the future. This is welcomed by many of our members, including disabled members. However, it is important to ensure that where such policies are agreed, that the local government employer accepts the need to continue to provide reasonable adjustments at home and in the workplace for disabled workers.

There is a danger that some local government employers may feel they are not responsible for staff working from home, despite their legal duty of care and duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled workers. Other local government employers may feel they only need to provide the adjustment once and ask workers to choose whether they want adjustments at home or in the office. This is clearly not acceptable and should be resisted by local government branches.

It is also important that local government employers agree policies around ensuring disabled home and hybrid workers aren't excluded by inaccessible virtual and hybrid meeting platforms or overlooked for training and promotion opportunities as a result of home working.

In addition, there are disadvantages to home working that may disproportionately impact on disabled people working from home as a reasonable adjustment, such as higher utility bills due to spiralling costs and the need to maintain warmer environments for longer for some, that employers need to be made aware of.

Conference welcomes UNISON's Home and Hybrid Working bargaining guide which can be used by branches to raise these issues with local government employers.

Conference further notes that some local government staff in frontline roles did not have access to home working during the pandemic. Staff in these roles are often disproportionately Black workers and conference believes that it is important that occupational segregation does not lead to unequal access to home and hybrid working in the future.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Encourage local government branches to agree home and hybrid working policies with their employers that include a robust right to reasonable adjustments for disabled workers both at home and in the workplace;
- 2) Promote UNISON's Home and Hybrid Working bargaining guide to branches and regions;
- 3) Raise issues of occupational segregation and unequal access to home and hybrid working for frontline workers at a national level with local government employers.

11. Pay – Campaigning & Balloting

Carried

Recent pay campaigns across the UK have demonstrated that we need to do much more in order to build the confidence of our members in challenging bad practice by their employers.

We know that pay matters to members, who have suffered years of austerity, pay cuts/freezes and threats to jobs/services, but they often do not feel able to engage and participate in our democratic processes when we move to escalate action.

This conference welcomes the national review into pay and balloting and encourages the Local Government Service Group to fully engage and participate in the process.

In 2021 the Scottish Local Government Committee took a new approach as part of their SJC pay campaign. In addition to carrying out two consultative ballots they also conducted a national disaggregate industrial action ballot. Whilst turnout varied across the country, with the legal threshold being met in a number of areas, the national turnout was the highest of any national LG pay industrial action ballot at 44.2%. This ballot was part of a joint trade union strategy of escalating action which we were able to use to force the Scottish government to provide additional funding for an improved offer which added £86m to the paybill and secured the highest uplift for those on the lowest wages that we have ever achieved.

It is clear that we need a new approach to pay campaigning which ends the continued undervaluing of our members' work. We must build in more time for campaigning, building members' confidence and engagement and how best flex our industrial muscle on pay.

This conference calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Fully participate in the national pay campaigning and balloting review;

- 2) Make representations to the NEC calling for additional resources to be directed to the balloting sections;
- 3) Ensure telephone banking arrangements are in place and form part of the facilities available to regions and branches;
- 4) Consider how we can join up our campaigns across the four nations and implement the necessary arrangements to facilitate this.

13. Pay for Members Employed by Private Contractors Delivering Local Government Services.

Carried as Amended: 13.1

Conference notes with concern that cuts to local authority budgets and the costs of Covid are impacting disproportionately on the salaries of our members in employed by private contractors who deliver local government outsourced services – including social care, school meals and refuse collection.

Many employers delivering outsourced services are engaging in a race to the bottom on terms and conditions of employment and a lack of trade union recognition makes it difficult to engage on pay. Some employers are even claiming that the increase in the National Minimum Wage of the lowest rates is a ‘pay offer’ rather than a legal requirement for all employers to increase salaries for the lowest paid.

Perpetuating low pay in outsourced services has a disproportionate impact on women, Black workers and their families that may also be suffering socio economic deprivation.

There is evidence that, in some cases, the terms offered by commissioners are so low that some employers will no longer tender for contracts as they cannot provide a service for the price offered. Employers who do tender for these contracts cannot possibly reward staff fairly for their complex range of skills, dedication and compassion. This entrenches inequality and means our fantastic care workers are receiving less than the real living wage.

However, where we have recruited and our members have organised, we have been able to win improvements in pay and conditions, using negotiation and where necessary strike action, such as with the traffic wardens in Camden.

Conference calls upon the Local Government Service Group Executive to campaign for pay rises to ensure that members delivering outsourced services in local government to pay at least the real living wage to their staff.

Conference further calls on the Local Government SGE to campaign for:

- 1) Union recognition with private contractors, locally, regionally or nationally as appropriate
- 2) An end to the use of zero hour contracts

- 3) Occupational sick pay comparable to that of in-house members

14. Violence at Work – It's Not Part of the Job!

Carried

Conference is deeply concerned at the violence, including threats and physical violence, that is shown towards those working in local government.

The latest Health & Safety Executive statistics show that around 307,000 adults of working age in employment experienced violence at work, with an estimated 688,000 individual incidents of violence.

According to the Labour Force Survey latest estimates of workers who are injured at work as a result of physical acts of violence, show that on average around 46,000 workers in Great Britain sustained non-fatal injuries. This accounts for about 8% of all workplace non-fatal injuries. Furthermore, the survey shows that around 9 out of 10 workers who sustain an injury resulting from violence at work are employed in public services with the human health and social care sector showing a high proportion of those injuries.

The pandemic has presented a new act of violence with the risk of infection for example customers refusing to adhere to social distancing measures which makes staff feel uncomfortable and at risk of infection. This will be even more the case now Covid measures have been rolled back but infection rates remain high. In addition, with the move to home working or hybrid working, members now take abusive phone calls or receive abusive emails whilst in their own homes, which can feel like a real intrusion of privacy.

Conference further recognises that those with a protected characteristic are more likely to experience incidents of violence at work including in the form of discrimination and harassment.

Conference notes the work of UNISON's Community Voluntary Sector in drafting, and getting employers to sign up to, UNISON's End Violence at Work Charter. This provides clear standards that employers are expected to meet and provides a model for all UNISON branches to consider in their discussions with the employer.

Conference further notes the work being undertaken by UNISON in regard to violence shown towards those working in our libraries.

Yet despite all this good work, violence towards UNISON members working within local government continues to rise, with those working within the social care sector being most at risk.

This Conference calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Review and amend UNISON's Violence at Work Charter to ensure that it is appropriate to be used in a local government environment;

- 2) Ensure that all UNISON Self-Organised Groups are fully involved in the review and amendment of the Violence at Work Charter;
- 3) Promote UNISON's Violence at Work Charter to all local government Branches and members;
- 4) Extend the work currently being undertaken in regard to violence shown towards those working in our libraries to cover all local government workers;
- 5) Develop a national campaign to promote the work of those working in local government which encourages the public to value and respect those workers and shows that any violence shown against an individual will not be tolerated.

16. Term Time Working

Carried

This conference congratulates those branches that have secured settlements to correct historic underpayments of holiday pay for term time only (TTO) workers. Since the publication of the NJC guidance in 2019, UNISON has secured over £55 million in settlements for term time only staff who have been underpaid.

The conference commends the joint guidance to branches and believes that all employers that have staff on term time contracts should negotiate local agreements with UNISON that ensure fair and equal treatment for term time staff.

However, there have been delays in producing further joint guidance on sickness and maternity leave for term time only staff and many term time only staff continue to be treated less favourably than their full time colleagues in these areas.

The Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the Local Government Association to complete the work of the NJC TTO working group on guidance around maternity, shared parental leave and other family leave entitlements, and sickness pay and leave;
- 2) Further develop guidance, bargaining advice and training for branches on term time working issues;
- 3) Encourage and monitor the implementation of comprehensive local agreements on term time working arrangements following the publication of the NJC guidance;
- 4) Continue to challenge those employers who we believe are discriminating against term time workers;
- 5) Work with the Schools Committee and regions to take this bargaining agenda into Multi Academy Trusts that cross branch and regional boundaries and private sector contractors operating in schools;

- 6) Use this campaign as an organising issue to further build our density within schools settings.

17. School Support Staff

Carried as Amended: 17.1

Conference notes that school support staff have worked tirelessly in schools throughout the pandemic to support pupils, parents, and their communities - from ensuring free school meals provision, to deep cleaning schools, to covering classes when teachers were isolating. Conference believes they are the unsung heroes who rarely get the recognition they deserve by the media and decision makers.

Conference further believes that school staff were severely let down by the Westminster governments who failed to implement sufficient safety measures in schools to protect them, their families, and pupils. This has left many unnecessarily exposed to a much greater risk of Covid and long Covid.

Conference further notes that whilst support staff have exemplified the very best of public service ethos during the pandemic, we have seen examples of very worst behaviour by some outsourcing companies. A UNISON survey showed that some of the largest private catering companies in schools refused to pay their staff full pay when they needed to isolate, leaving many low paid staff in fear of both illness and poverty due to the paltry rates of statutory sick pay in the UK.

Conference believes that the huge work pressures of the last two years combined with low pay have created a crisis. In a recent UNISON survey for the annual Stars in our Schools celebration, more than two in five (42%) school support staff in England and Wales said they were actively looking for better paid jobs because of the rising cost of living and persistent low pay in education. The survey responses painted a bleak picture of school employees living with no heating or hot water because of broken boilers they cannot afford to fix, worrying about how to pay for dental treatment and reliant on food banks. Conference strongly believes this is scandal, a personal crisis for every individual member and a recruitment and retention crisis for every school.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Run a high-profile public campaign to highlight the invaluable work of school support staff (during and prior to the pandemic) and the risk that large numbers of staff will leave due to intolerable work pressures and low pay; with the aim of pressurising governments to increase funding for school support staff pay;
- 2) Reaffirm the service group's support for the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) in England, and to support the work being undertaken in the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) to standardise their school support staff roles and terms and conditions;

- 3) Continue to campaign nationally and locally for all outsourced services in schools and colleges to be brought in-house;
- 4) In the interim to work with the Schools, NJC and SJC Committees to run a campaign to win improved terms and conditions for outsourced staff with the aim of getting them onto NJC/SJC terms and conditions and the Foundation Living Wage / Scottish Living Wage as a minimum; and to support members taking industrial action carried out within all relevant legislation and the UNISON rule book to seek to win these terms where negotiations do not work;
- 5) Work to ensure staff suffering from long Covid are fully supported by their employers; including campaigning for the disregarding of any sickness absence related to Covid-19 for the purposes of sickness absence triggers or sickness management policies, as is the case in the NHS;
- 6) Work with the NEC to submit evidence to the Covid public enquiry on the failure of the Westminster government to implement sufficient safety measures and guidance in schools during the pandemic.

18. Support the Mental Health of Staff in Colleges

Carried

Conference notes that mental health problems have been brought to the fore over the course of the pandemic. The Health and Safety Executive defines a mental health problem as “The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”.

According to the TUC, 70% of union safety reps report stress as a top workplace concern; finding that the education sector has significantly higher than average rates of stress. The causes are manifold; workload, cuts to staffing numbers, long working hours, and constant organisational change. Additionally, stakeholders know that there is a crisis to students’ mental health that has a knock-on effect for the staff who need to help and support them. The significant cuts to the funding of further education since 2009 mean that staff working in the sector know better than many the stress of annual restructures and attendant threats to jobs. When coupled with pay cuts the stress only increases.

The UNISON 2021 mental health in colleges survey revealed that anxiety in the sector increased six-fold over the course of the pandemic, from 7% prior to March 2020 to 41% after the last lockdown. Staff self-reporting as ‘somewhat anxious’ increased from 36% to 80%. Anxiety over workload increased 5-fold over the course of the pandemic and a quarter of staff expressed fear they could lose their job. Many of these concerns were realised when restructures began once again in the summer term.

Conference notes that mental health is an equality issue. The same survey revealed that slightly more women than men felt very anxious at the beginning of the 2020 (7%:6% respectively) with the gap widening over the course of the pandemic (43%:36% respectively). Younger members were significantly more anxious (90%) and worryingly, were also less likely to use any support services offered by

employers. They only reported using services that remained confidential whilst also feeling they needed more support. Many respondents reported that managers did not have awareness of, or make the space for, mental health to be discussed and that support offered is just a 'box-ticking exercise'.

Governments across the UK are dipping their toes in the water of supporting staff mental health. The Welsh government is providing £50m of funding for a wellbeing project with the joint trade unions and the employers. In Scotland the pay claim called for 2 mental health days for staff. In England the DfE Mental Health Charter has been signed up to by UNISON.

But this is not enough. The conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Develop resources to signpost staff in the direction of mental health resources;
- 2) Work with outside organisations such as the Charlie Waller Trust to develop resources;
- 3) Ensure that mental health workshops and resources are available at all FE events;
- 4) Provide resources to support reps to work with employers on mental health policies;
- 5) Set up a peer-to-peer support group for staff reps;
- 6) Lobby governments of all 4 nations for better support of mental health in colleges;
- 7) Campaign for fully-funded professional counselling services in colleges.

21. School-based Counselling in Every Primary and Secondary School in England

Carried

The grief, anxiety and depression children have experienced during the pandemic is welling over into classrooms and hallways, resulting in crying and disruptive behaviour in many younger kids and increased violence and bullying among adolescents. For many other children, who keep their sadness and fear inside, the pressures of school have become too great.

Good mental health is fundamental to be able to thrive in life. If we're not tackling mental health problems early, then we risk failing the next generation right at the start of their lives.

We know there is no one single way for schools to provide such an environment. To make them mentally healthy places for all who attend and work in them, we need to pursue a "whole-school" approach to prevention. School staff, leadership, the

curriculum, children, and access to support all contribute to creating a mentally healthy, nurturing environment for children and young people.

Speaking to a school counsellor can be a transformative experience for children and young people. It can help them cope with the difficult circumstances they face in their lives and to go on and flourish in the future.

But England is lagging in its provision of counselling in schools. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland all have government funded school counselling services. England does not.

As children face increased change and uncertainty in their lives because of the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it's more important than ever before that they have access to this vital therapeutic support.

A trained school counsellor gives a young person a place that is focused 100% on their needs, a safe space to help them to understand and cope with what they're going through.

Counselling has a positive effect on young people's confidence, resilience, sense of self-worth, family relationships, friendships, school attendance and academic achievement.

A survey this year by NAHT showed an increased prevalence of other mental health issues among pupils this school year, including staff seeing:

- 1) 86% noted an increase in low self-esteem
- 2) 76% said they'd seen an increase in depression
- 3) 68% witnessed an increase in sustained feelings of anger

For staff working in secondary schools, 72% have noticed an increase in self-harm, 61% in suicidal thoughts, and 56% in eating difficulties among pupils.

Unfortunately, only 23% of staff said they had regularly been able to access specialist support for pupils with mental health needs, leaving most children and young people struggling without access to the support they need.

Poor mental health in school age children has a negative impact on UNISON members working in schools due to:

- a) Pupils' not engaging in learning
- b) Pupils' poor behaviour increasing
- c) Staff workload increasing
- d) Staff wellbeing impacted negatively

Positive mental health in pupils leads to better workplaces for our members.

Newcastle City Branch has been working with Citizens UK on their campaign with the British Association for Counselling to secure a fully funded statutory provision of school-based counselling in every primary and secondary school in England.

We call upon the Local Government Service Group Executive to support the Citizens UK school-based campaign by:

- i) Publicly endorsing and promoting the Citizens UK campaign;
- ii) Encouraging other UNISON branches to collaborate with regional chapters of Citizens UK on this issue; and
- iii) Encouraging individual UNISON members to promote the campaign within schools they work in.

22. Organising in Multi Academy Trusts

Carried

The school system has continued to fragment away from local authorities with the expansion of academies and large Multi Academy Trusts (MATs).

Conference notes that Local Authorities have been consistently undermined by the government to drive maintained schools to convert. Strategies have ranged from temporary MAT membership for schools that are 'nervous' about joining Trusts, to the phasing out of the School Improvement Monitoring Grant over the next two years – further weakening the support Local Authorities can offer maintained schools.

As MATs have grown, many now go beyond local authority and regional borders. Decisions taken by these employers therefore no longer impact just one school, branch or even region of the union.

Conference believes the fragmentation of the education system is such that a comprehensive organising strategy is required that brings UNISON members and branches together across local authority borders on a scale not previously seen.

Conference notes this situation presents a number of challenges, but also recruitment and organising opportunities.

Ensuring MAT's pay into local authority facility time budgets, developing reps within MATs and establishing meaningful industrial relationships with employers must be key priorities. In time MATs will also seek to establish a single pay and grading structure. This is not necessarily a negative development and through rep training UNISON can negotiate positive improvements for members.

Conference understands that Service Level Agreements (SLAs) on areas such as cleaning and catering are also a key bargaining priority for the union.

All staff play an important role in the education of pupils - which has been further highlighted by the pandemic - yet many privately contracted staff are facing a period of uncertainty and low pay as the impact of Covid-19 and cost of living crisis takes hold. Low sick pay in this sector is a sufficient issue in light of the government's isolation requirements.

In a recent UNISON survey of school meals staff, one in five were worried that children are not receiving properly nutritional meals due to menu changes.

Local Authorities depend on SLAs with schools to provide important income. Conference believes that these arrangements should be promoted as they ensure quality provision together with decent terms and conditions for staff.

However, where SLAs are outsourced to private companies, conference believes there should be campaigns for them to be brought in-house or that procurement is considered with local authorities.

In seeking to strengthen our ability to organise in schools, conference calls on the Local Government Service Group to:

- 1) Further strengthen the fight against cuts to school funding;
- 2) Develop more effective alliances with a range of outside organisations, such as the various local government associations, school leaders and political parties, to help secure equitable funding for schools;
- 3) Establish an organising review of schools that incorporates a recommended framework for branches and regions to coordinate activity and negotiations with MATs that cross local authority and regional borders;
- 4) Roll out job evaluation training for reps to prepare for consolidated pay and grading structures in these MATs;
- 5) Establish benchmarking of terms and conditions for private sector outsourced school staff with a view to running campaigns to improve terms and conditions through either local authority contracts or bringing the services in-house;
- 6) Campaign for all schools to be NJC-aligned.

23. Health and Social Care Integration – Implications for Local Government members

Carried

Conference recognises that the integration of health and social services is a long-mooted ambition across the UK from large parts of the worlds of local government and health.

However, conference notes that in the few instances where health and social care integration is taken forward, the role of local government in the provision of social

care services is often greatly diminished or sidelined completely, as could result from the new Westminster Health and Care Bill.

Conferences notes that the delivery of social care services across the UK, with a continued preference for the use of outsourced employers in place of in-house provision, is often problematic and damaging to the terms and conditions of our members. However, to diminish the democratic accountability that local councils have is something that should be resisted whenever greater integration takes place.

Conference condemns the recent actions of the Westminster government. The lack of sufficient funding, the inability to provide an urgent pay uplift and the recent white paper's failure to provide a major system overhaul are deeply damaging for the care sector. The planned social care cap also disproportionately benefits the wealthiest in society. But it also places a serious question mark against the government's claims that their new social care bill will bring about greater integration between health and social care. It is impossible to expect integration to be a success when one half of the partnership continues to operate in crisis mode, without a sufficiently ambitious route map to a more sustainable future. Furthermore, the Health and Care Bill proposes a 'discharge to assess' approach that could increase demand on woefully overstretched community services.

Conference also expresses concern about the Scottish government's intention to marginalise the involvement of local councils in the delivery of social care services.

Conference believes that care services perform better when the voice of the workforce is recognised and heard. Therefore, conference believes that greater integration of health and care services should include far greater representation for the workforce in decision-making.

Conference understands that this will only be achieved through efforts at all levels and sectors within the union, but that local government branches will play a significant part in this. Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Campaign to ensure that local councils and trade unions are given an equal partnership role alongside health colleagues in any future iterations of health and care;
- 2) Continue to campaign and lobby for far better funding for the social care sector, to ensure that integrated health and care services can be delivered in the public sector and commissioned fairly and efficiently;
- 3) Work with other service groups to establish a working group to determine what training, resources and campaign materials branch activists might require, to enable them to positively engage with and influence any attempts to integrate health and care services in their area;
- 4) Through Labour Link, work with Labour MPs, other elected politicians and Labour policy making structures to embed UNISON's approach to health and care integration within Labour Party policy;

5) Work with residents and community groups on this campaign.

24. LGBT+ Workers and Adult Social Care

Carried

Conference notes the Tory government, has broken manifesto pledges by raising National Insurance contributions and suspending the 'triple lock' on pension increases. On 7th September 2021, it published 'Build Back Better: Our plan for health and social care' announcing an impending White Paper on the future provision of adult social care in England.

Conference also notes that that the outsourcing and privatisation of social care has led to deteriorating services and the widespread exploitation of workers through low pay, zero hours contracts and attacks on our members' pay, terms and conditions while generating profits for hedge funds and shareholders

Conference acknowledges that while this impacts negatively on our members working in social care in innumerable ways, the cuts affect different groups of members in different ways, with disproportionate impact on members of disadvantaged groups. Conference further acknowledges that there is substantial evidence that many social care providers lack understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) issues. This clearly has implications for LGBT+ workers.

Conference also acknowledges that there is roughly a fifty/fifty split in the numbers of adults receiving social care between those who are retired and those of working age. There will be a significant number of LGBT+ people who are, or will be, users of adult social care. Some will be disabled and/or retired LGBT+ UNISON Local Government Service Group members.

Conference welcomes UNISON's continuing campaign for a National Care Service and the continued work undertaken by the Local Government Service Group Executive (in collaboration with other UNISON structures) to promote UNISON's Ethical Care and Residential Care Charters.

Conference also welcomes the work of the Northern Ireland region in working with statutory and voluntary organisations to develop 'Guidelines to support the needs of older LGBT+ people in nursing, residential, and day care settings and those who live at home and receive domiciliary care' and a training programme to support the implementation of these guidelines. This has been aimed at ensuring that staff working in these settings, many of whom are UNISON members, are aware of the particular needs of older LGBT+ service users and implement their right to be treated with dignity and respect. This also contributes to the development of a more inclusive working environment for LGBT+ workers.

Conference therefore calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to work with the National LGBT+ Committee to promote the Ethical and Residential Care Charters, emphasising the importance for LGBT+ members;
- 2) Urge branches in the service group to use the UNISON LGBT+ bargaining factsheets to review employer policies and agreements with employers with a view to achieving best practice;
- 3) Work in conjunction with the National LGBT+ Committee and other relevant parts of the union to develop a campaign to promote good practice on supporting LGBT+ workers and LGBT+ service users in social care settings to bodies responsible for the delivery and regulation of social care, drawing on the work already done by the Northern Ireland region;
- 4) Engage with appropriate UNISON structures to raise awareness of the needs of LGBT+ disabled and older adult social care users requesting that these are included in any UNISON response to the White Paper on the future of adult social care in England;
- 5) Continue to campaign against the privatisation of social care and for services to be brought back in house, and for a National Care Service.

25. Promote UNISON as the Union for Social Work

Carried as Amended: 25.1, 25.2

Social work teams across the country provide a vital service to our communities by supporting those who are often society's most vulnerable – including children, older adults, and individuals with physical or learning disabilities. Social work teams have continued to provide this care during the pandemic, often by making difficult decisions and quickly adapting to new ways of working.

UNISON has a brilliant membership benefits package for all social work staff. In the Northern Region we have developed a social work project to communicate these benefits to social work teams in a focused way. Our project aims to make clear that UNISON is the union for social work.

Our project has included specific recruitment and organising priorities agreed by a social work network of activists, a template presentation outlining UNISON's offer to social work teams, and a plan for a targeted approach to student social work recruitment.

As part of our project we will be celebrating international social work day in March 2022 with an online event, accessible to all UNISON Northern members, which will promote our offer to social work teams. The event will profile the work of UNISON Professional Services Unit (PSU) in particular.

The new dedicated UNISON webpage for social work is welcomed by UNISON Northern and it has been received positively by activists by making key information more accessible for existing and potential future UNISON members. We also welcome the move to adapt our regional social work manifesto with a view to launching a UNISON wide social work manifesto.

UNISON has also been at the forefront of the opposition to the National Assessment and Accreditation Scheme, which only adds a further unnecessary burden upon social workers. We have also worked in the recent past with partners such as Community Care to produce training events and produced guides such as the excellent 'Safe Haven' guidance. This practice-based activity is essential to developing our profile as the union for social workers; Social worker forums at branch, regional and national level can also play a vital role in allowing a space for social workers to discuss practice issues in a progressive environment.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- a) Build on this progress by working with regions and branches to build a campaign to promote UNISON as the union for social work;
- b) Encourage regions to promote and share UNISON's Social Work Manifesto;
- c) Encourage regions to promote the work of the UNISON Professional Services Unit;
- d) Call upon all regions to promote International Social Work Day each year;
- e) Encourage regions to develop regional social work forums;
- f) Consider running a campaign to highlight social worker caseloads that also promotes the awareness of 'caseload weighting';
- g) Consider developing social work issues groups such as already exist in Scotland Region.

26. Care Workers

Carried

Conference applauds the work carried out by care workers across the UK throughout the Covid pandemic and beyond and recognises the work done across UNISON in supporting our members and establishing ourselves as the union for the care workforce.

Conference notes that despite the increasing recognition of the need to bring change to our care systems throughout the UK, there is still little to no appetite from those in government (UK or devolved) to embrace the idea of public ownership and provision of care.

Conference condemns the total lack of ambition in the Westminster government's social care white paper which will do very little to improve the working conditions of care workers across England or seek to change the failed model of outsourced/privatised delivery of care. Conference is also disappointed by the ambitions of the Scottish government's National Care Service to significantly remove council control and involvement in the delivery of social care (this may change depending on consultation outcome).

Conference also notes that there has been little progress from local councils, albeit in part due to financial restrictions, in bringing care workers back in-house, but applauds the work of UNISON branches where this has happened in places such as East Ayrshire and Cheshire West and Chester. Conference reaffirms that critically important services like social care cannot be left to the market, and must be delivered in-house.

Conference notes that whilst the public profile of care workers has finally started to rise, thanks in large part to the work of UNISON, there is still not enough recognition and understanding of the range of tasks regularly carried out by care workers and how complex and challenging their work can be. The jobs of many care workers are increasingly medicalised and the skill and level of responsibility they hold should be recognised through better pay and conditions. Conference believes that if there was a greater understanding of the realities of care work across the UK then there would be more support for UNISON's core social care campaign aims and objectives.

Conference applauds the actions of the Welsh government in trying to improve pay rates for care workers and in seeking to establish a national forum for employers and trade unions, as happens in the NHS. Such an initiative would be welcome throughout the rest of the UK as a way of improving terms and conditions for care workers. Conference believes this sort of approach could serve as an interim measure ahead of establishing a publicly owned and provided national care service.

Conference notes that the future of social care could look very different in Scotland depending on what comes out of the National Care Service for Scotland. Conference is extremely concerned about the Scottish government's determination to centralise a variety of functions and believes that UNISON should respond robustly to any drive to remove social care services and jobs from the control of local authorities.

Conference recognises this is a pivotal time for the future of social care across the UK in terms of how it is funded and delivered. It urges the Local Government Service Group Executive to continue to make improving the terms and conditions of care workers a key priority in the years ahead.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to lead the positive Future Social Care Coalition and build support for a national care service across the UK and to bring all care services back in-house;

- 2) Continue to ensure that social care remains a priority campaign issue within the Service Group and as part of the union's new joined up approach to the issue;
- 3) Campaign for more funding to be given to councils across the UK in order to help fund the delivery of better quality care services and better terms and conditions for care workers;
- 4) Promote examples of UNISON branches and regions who have managed to return care services back in-house and put pressure on all other councils to do the same;
- 5) Raise awareness about how demanding and complex the roles of care workers are, alongside efforts to ensure they are paid accordingly for their work; mount a campaign to show the work done by home carers during the pandemic;
- 6) Work with other Service Groups, branches, regions and UNISON's Strategic Organising Unit to develop a national organising strategy which builds our industrial strength in the sector and builds on our rising membership, solidifying our position as THE union for social care;
- 7) Continue to seek to influence the Westminster government to establish a national forum between employers and trade unions, to address issues in the sector, similar to that in operation in the NHS;
- 8) Campaign for a minimum wage of £15 an hour for care workers.

Composite A (Motions 27, 30 and 34) Climate Change in Local Government
Carried

Conference recognises the climate emergency and supports the de-carbonisation ambitions of national and devolved governments. Conference notes the key role that local government will play in delivering net zero strategies, being uniquely placed to lead by example and also increase public awareness of the scale and pace of change needed to meet the climate emergency.

Conference notes that councils are key to meeting emission targets. They are directly responsible for between 2% and 5% of their local area's emissions and play a significant role in emissions reduction due to their powers over housing, planning, transport, waste and other issues.

Conference notes the failure of Glasgow Climate Pact, the outcome of COP26, to live up to the crisis of climate change. The measures in the pact, if all are achieved, will still see global temperatures rise above the 1.5 degrees, and no more than 2 degrees, above pre-industrial levels that was agreed in the Paris Agreement as necessary to prevent disastrous climate change.

Conference recognises that the ambition to tackle climate change is not matched by the actions of the UK government and many more particularly in the developed world.

Conference recognises that climate change is impacting now on our members' workplaces, jobs and service delivery through the:

- 1) Increasing frequency of severe weather events and the associated disruption, risks and costs;
- 2) Increasing temperatures in workplaces and for outdoor workers;
- 3) Need to develop new skills and train in new technologies;
- 4) Worsening air quality in workplaces and when travelling to and from work.

Conference recognises the need for all councils to have climate change adaptation policies to meet these already occurring impacts of climate change.

Conference welcomes the declarations of a climate emergency declared by many councils which is a recognition of the seriousness of the issue and a recognition that councils are part of the solution, as well as part of the problem.

Conference welcomes the fact that 91% of councils have adopted at least one net-zero commitment and 38% of single and upper tier authorities have declared intentions to decarbonise their local area by or before 2030.

Conference welcomes the publication, during COP26, of UNISON's report 'Getting to net zero in UK public services: The road to decarbonisation' which details the measures and costs for public services to meet climate targets.

Local authorities are directly responsible for between 2- 5% of their local area's emissions and so the decarbonisation of local government is critical. This will require significant investment from central government to enable councils to meet the challenge and political will at local level to implement a transition to zero-carbon local authorities.

Conference recognises that such a transition presents significant challenges to the workforce with a need for new skills to be developed, changes in working practices and how services are delivered and that therefore there is a need to negotiate a just transition for local authorities both at a national and at a local level.

Local authorities have been at the forefront of investment and innovation in energy, transport, buildings, and procurement for many years. As we cautiously look towards a post-Covid future, there are opportunities for realising some of the co-benefits of investing in a green recovery, such as improved health and wellbeing, better digital connectivity, improved housing and schools, and reduced fuel poverty.

However, conference recognises that local authorities' powers in relation to housing, planning, transport, waste and other issues are key to delivering the transition. As such, local authorities have a direct impact on the government's commitment to achieve 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and 2045 in Scotland, beyond the issue of their direct emissions.

During the crisis CO2 emissions fell by 17% and we know that new behaviours such as home working, increased use of technology and digital delivery of services, amongst others, have helped to achieve this.

Whilst the immediate focus is about managing and recovering from the current crisis, there is an opportunity to build on these changes and create a sustainable low-emissions society.

If local government is to lead by example, there must be adequate funding in place to ensure that no-one is left behind, including the workforce, in the transition to a carbon neutral society.

Last year, UNISON research uncovered a budget shortfall for councils in England, Scotland and Wales of £3 billion. Conference believes this will jeopardise the climate targets of local authorities. Councils will be left with a false choice between delivering essential services or meeting climate targets. It is UNISON members and their families who will pay the cost environmentally, health-wise and financially, with jobs under threat as council budgets become squeezed further.

Research undertaken on behalf of UNISON last year estimated that to deal with the climate crisis, local government required both the largest upfront investment (£68 billion) and additional operational budget (£0.5 billion a year) of all the public services due to its responsibility for building retrofits, active travel infrastructure and the need to enhance waste collection and processing services.

UNISON research has demonstrated that local delivery of decarbonisation and retrofitting of public buildings, social and community housing would create over 240,000 jobs over fifteen years, or even more jobs if this work is done more urgently over a shorter time period. Green job creation in local government is urgent given that the UK Committee on Climate Change has stated that the next decade is critical if we are to transition to 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Conference believes that UNISON has a vital role to play in campaigning for greener policies nationally and in the workplace. This will involve working with employers every step of the way to ensure that the transition to 'net zero' is fair to every worker. The active support and engagement of local government workers is crucial.

Conference recognises that UNISON and our local government branches and activists have a key role to play in achieving the decarbonisation of councils and in negotiating the just transition necessary. Union reps and members are experts in the services they provide and are a knowledge base for ideas needed to realise net zero ambitions in local government.

Conference therefore calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- a) Develop guidance for all sectors on the bargaining issues relating to climate change, adaptation and a just transition for the local government workforce;
- b) Campaign for, and raise awareness of what a worker focussed 'Just Transition' would look like in practice in local government;
- c) Campaign and lobby for adequate funding for local government across the UK and Northern Ireland to meet net-zero ambitions; demand the level of central government funding needed to meet the climate change crisis as outlined in UNISON's report 'Getting to Net Zero.';
- d) Lobby central government for an additional decarbonisation funding stream for local government services to enable local authorities to reach 'net zero' targets without further cuts to local services;
- e) Call on central government to provide local government with the statutory powers to oversee and make decisions around the local delivery of decarbonisation and retrofitting of public building and social housing;
- f) Encourage all bargaining groups in local government to develop a clear just transition strategy for negotiation with employers including skills audits, introduction of electric vehicles, allowances and facilities that encourage active travel to and during work, workplace recycling facilities, appropriate home working policies to reduce emissions due to travelling to work, etc;
- g) Conduct research into council estimates on the cost of reaching 'net zero' at a local level and share the findings with branches;
- h) Campaign for local authorities to develop renewable energy generating capacity, municipally owned, for the benefit of council services and their communities;
- i) Lobby for the involvement of union reps at all levels of the decarbonisation discussions taking place in local government;
- j) Support the training and development of UNISON Green Reps in local government and associated sectoral employers;
- k) Encourage all bargaining groups in local government to seek recognition for UNISON trained Green Reps allowing facility time to take forward climate issues in workplaces and to support bargaining at a local level;
- l) Work with the sectors and regions to negotiate with employers and employers' sides for facility time for union environment reps; campaign and negotiate for time off for Green Reps to participate fully at employer level.

- m) Provide guidance to reps on first steps to negotiating on environmental issues;
- n) Identify good practice examples of UNISON environmental projects in local government;
- o) Continue to promote UNISON training sessions on environmental issues to regions and branches;
- p) Continue to promote regional and local events to raise awareness of climate breakdown and its implications for UNISON members.

28. Covid-19 and the Continued Impact on Women working in Local Government

Carried

Covid-19 has had an enormous impact on women. Women are over-represented in jobs providing essential services and do a greater share of unpaid care than men.

Women not only form the majority of workers in local government but are also the majority of key workers who are paid less than £10 an hour, face limited childcare options and form the majority of part-time workers.

Many of these women have jobs such as carers, cleaners, catering workers, early learning and teaching assistants. As key workers they were exposed to a higher risk of infection. Some were furloughed and some had to reduce their hours or even give up their jobs during the lockdowns because of the difficulty of balancing caring commitments with work.

There is a widening gender gap in unpaid work as women are expected to pick up the slack created by widespread reduction in social care packages, made even more difficult by the persistent inadequacy of social security provision.

The recent £20 cut in Universal Credit has impacted this group of low-paid women workers particularly hard. The economic impact is becoming worse as inflation rises and energy costs increase. But they also need fair pay. They should be valued and paid properly and not have to rely on Universal Credit.

Women working in the local government service group need policies that support them economically and socially including a strong social security safety net if they are to contribute in turn to the recovery from the pandemic.

Conference asks the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to campaign for fair pay for workers in the local government service group, focussing on low paid women in particular;

- 2) Work with the NEC, National Women's Committee and other appropriate parts of the union to lobby the government and campaign for improved funding for childcare so it is affordable and accessible for key workers;
- 3) Include demands for flexible working arrangements and carer's leave appropriate to the post-Covid world of work in the bargaining agenda and encourage branches to raise these issues with employers;
- 4) Work with regions, branches and the National Women's Committee to encourage women in the service group to become activists and particularly health and safety and/or equality reps.

29. End Misogyny and Violence Against Women

Carried

This conference supports women in their fight against misogyny, aggression, harassment violence against women in society. We have seen an increase in this behaviour nationally and locally towards female Members of Parliament, Councillors and elected officials and staff.

Recent cases highlight this such as the Goodwillie, Mendy, Greenwood and the Met Police highlight the struggle women have when raising issues that lead to low conviction rates and feeling of isolation and lack of support when raising this issues.

We have seen elected members facing increased aggression with women facing harassment especially via social media for example MPs such as Diane Abbott, Angela Rayner and Dr Rosena Ali Khan. Recent cases in Kent, for example, where trade union members who are councillors were subject to ridicule and misogyny from Tory councillors when raising the issue of cuts to Universal Credit which was widely reported in local and national media. This was seen by UNISON members and widely condemned.

We have watched televised council meetings where misogynistic comments have been aimed at Labour councillors dismissed as banter and the political cut & thrust of politics.

If this behaviour is seen as "banter" or "cut and thrust of politics" when it involves such high-profile women what message does it send to our members working in local government, many who will have experienced such behaviours and unfortunately some who may be the perpetrators.

This behaviour should not be tolerated in any organisation whether political parties, trade unions, or local government. When women members from local government branches raise complaints against such behaviours they should never feel unsupported and alone.

This conference calls upon the National Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Ensure all members in local government, and particularly women members, who raise complaints against such behaviour from anyone never feel unsupported or isolated;
- 2) Support local government branches when complaints are raised against elected members to ensure that our activists or members are not victimised;
- 3) Survey members in local government branches to identify patterns and concerns that women have in the workplace and report back to the next National Local Government Conference on:
 - a) A strategy to support women working in local government that experience such behaviour;
 - b) Weaknesses identified in councils' constitution that effectively treat elected members who are perpetrators differently to the standards that employees would be held to such as little or no sanctions against perpetrators.

31. A National Insourcing Strategy for Local Government

Carried

Conference congratulates the Neath Port Talbot Local Government Branch on the resounding success of their campaign to bring leisure services back in-house. Following a concerted campaign by the branch, on 1 February 2022 Neath Port Talbot Council made the unprecedented decision not to renew their contract with Celtic Leisure Trust, or seek another provider, but instead bring leisure services back under full council control. Bringing the services back in-house will bring about an end to nearly 20 years of outsourced leisure provision which has seen a two-tier workforce emerge between front line staff and management, poor management practices, a demoralised workforce and the proliferation of zero hour and casual contracts.

Behind the headlines lays a sustained, tactical campaign led by the branch. This included a petition signed by over 3800 people, protracted negotiations, public demonstrations, a webinar for councillors, the rebuttal of legal challenge, APSE involvement, tactful political lobbying, multiple press releases, social media videos and graphics.

Other in-sourcing developments in Wales include a decision by Powys County Council earlier this year to end a joint venture company with Kier which will bring maintenance staff back in house by July 2022. In Blaenau Gwent a decision has recently been taken to bring Silent Valley Waste back under full council control largely due to influence from the trade unions working in partnership.

Conference recognises the effort that such campaigns can take to win but the outcome is to be celebrated and used as a springboard for further success across UNISON. We must use these positive examples to serve as models for best practice and learning.

Conference therefore calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Campaign for continued in-sourcing of contracted out services in Local Government across the UK, sharing best practice and positive news stories across regions;
- 2) Develop a national public facing campaign, making best use of social media, to explain the benefits of in-sourced services;
- 3) Work with the Private Contractors Unit to support the development of a national data base of contracted out services to support regional organising strategies;
- 4) Disseminate contract end date details to regions using the current approach in home care services as an example of good practice;
- 5) Support regions and branches to develop organising capacity to negotiate for in-sourcing, including identifying target employers across regions;
- 6) Provide updated training for branches and organisers on contract negotiation using best practice in-sourcing models;
- 7) Support a reflection and learning approach when in-sourcing campaigns are won or lost;
- 8) Empower UNISON's position by encouraging branches to consider commissioning organisations like APSE to look beyond the narrow assessment of short-term costs commonly set out in the options analysis of a procurement process, providing a platform to identify long term financial and social investment opportunities that benefits public services and our communities.

32. Privatisation By The Back Door

Carried

All too often these days we see our council-run local government services are being outsourced, privatised or moved to wholly owned/arm's length companies. The setting up of these new companies, including social enterprises is frequently sold to branches and staff as nothing to be concerned about. In some circumstances the process can take place with very little UNISON involvement. What we have come to learn however, is that in reality these new employers, be they wholly owned, or ALMOS, can result in a two-tier workforce and detrimental changes for our members. It is just privatisation by the back door.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Provide clear information and training for branches on the legal structures and processes involved in councils setting up these new companies;
- 2) Provide more investigation and information on the impact of these arm's length companies on our members and on the public services our members provide;
- 3) Provide a practical toolkit for branches to work through which will take them through the difficult process of responding to employer proposals to establish these new companies;
- 4) Provide detailed case studies for local government branches to call on to bust the myths that this is a good news story. These will help branches to make the argument for services and staff to remain in house with staff directly employed on decent terms and conditions, sharing best practice with all branches across the nations;
- 5) Develop specific training on arm's length companies which can be delivered to branches;
- 6) Campaign nationally for this trend in privatisation by the back door to end.

33. Beyond Covid – Building a Better Future

Carried

In March 2020 thousands of workers across the UK adapted to a new way of working by taking into their own homes the employers' equipment in order for services to continue. Our frontline workers such as social care and care at home staff have continued to provide vital and lifesaving care to their clients, whilst maintaining a safe environment. We should recognise the brilliant response from our members in environmental health/trading standards, registration, housing, schools/early years, social work, committee services, culture/leisure, business support, finance staff and many more across our employer groupings - far too many to mention.

Many of our members also supported the work in childcare hubs, meal/medication distribution to our community, grants, business payments etc.- a lifeline for many. Some of your branch officers also participated in the community work alongside our members.

Wellbeing concerns of our members during the pandemic have highlighted the potential for significant rises in reporting of poor mental health. UNISON Renfrewshire considered ways in which we could support our members beyond normal representation and assistance. The branch decided to purchase a mobile home which is available to members at significantly affordable rates or through our local welfare fund.

UNISON at national, regional and branch level fought for local government workers throughout the pandemic -demanding PPE, support and action for groups worst affected. This has included taking difficult and challenging decisions around guidance, health & safety and campaigning.

This motion calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Establish a Covid legacy that “Rewards, Recognises and Respects” our members for the valuable work they do. This includes pay, terms & conditions and pensions;
- 2) Proper evaluation of home and hybrid working arrangements across our services and ensure we negotiate new working practice guidance that also addresses health & safety and remuneration;
- 3) A workers’ charter that recognises our members as first responders and establishes new and innovative “rights”.

37. Local Government Funding and Pay

Carried

Conference notes that research by UNISON recently revealed that councils in England and Wales are facing a combined funding shortfall of just under £5bn for the financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. The funding for councils subsequently announced in the Westminster government’s 2021 spending review fell woefully short of what was needed to fill that funding gap. This comes on the back of years of under-funding of local government, with local authorities losing billions of pounds in funding since 2010.

In the meantime, UNISON members in local government have seen the value of their own pay plummet as local government pay has stagnated. Years of pay freezes and sub-inflation pay increases have meant that since 2010, members covered by the NJC have lost an average of around 25% of the value of their pay. Local government pay at the bottom end remains too close to the government’s National Living Wage.

Conference believes that the funding situation for local government and the realities of local government pay are unsustainable. A new approach is needed, with a fairer and more substantial funding system for local government that enables employers to pay their staff decent wages.

Conference notes that during the 2020 NJC pay campaign, the Executive of the Local Government Association (LGA) agreed to approach the government for more funding for local government pay, but declined to make that approach jointly with the trade unions. During the 2021 pay campaign, the LGA Executive declined to lobby the government for more funding for local government pay, making clear they would focus their lobbying on funding for services, but not pay.

Conference recognises the extremely difficult state of local government finance. But conference believes that ensuring fair pay for local government staff is essential if local government services are to be defended. If local authorities want to recruit and

retain staff and provide high quality services, they must do more to secure better funding specifically for pay. There can be no trade-off between protecting jobs and ensuring fair pay.

Conference calls on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Continue to campaign for a new, fairer and larger funding settlement for local government from central government;
- 2) Support the devolved nations in their campaigns to ensure that funding settlements for local government reflect the full amount available from funding from Westminster;
- 3) Work with sector committees and devolved nations to ensure that pay is a key plank of UNISON's local government funding campaigns, so that politicians, the public and the media understand the link between central government funding, local government pay and quality local services;
- 4) Work with Labour Link and the NJC Committee on a strategy for joint work with Labour politicians in the LGA, to influence the LGA's decisions regarding lobbying government for funding for pay;
- 5) Produce campaigning and bargaining resources for branches to use in order to lobby local politicians in support of this work.

38. Youth Service Cuts and Impact on Crime

Carried

Conference notes that youth services have a vital positive and preventative role, and that youth workers and youth support workers provide input that enriches the lives of young people. In many and varied ways they help young people to lead positive lives as members of society. Youth services assist young people in finding employment, training or education; they help with potential mental health issues; and they help prevent alcohol and substance abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour. They also have the potential to bring diverse communities of young people together. Professional youth workers can recognise when a young person may need extra support outside of school or the home.

Conference is well aware that since 2010, youth services have drastically cut. Research published by UNISON in 2019 revealed that since 2010, 940 youth centres had been cut. We know from previous research that between 2010 and 2019, £400m was cut from youth service spending, and 4,500 youth work jobs were lost between 2012 and 2019.

Further UNISON research has been undertaken into the rise in crime in the UK, and whilst this can be clearly linked to cuts in policing, the link to cuts to youth services cannot be ignored. Youth work is not just about career guidance, mental health support and community cohesion. It is also an effective way of tackling the root causes of crime. Services aimed at young people are key to early intervention

against the causes of crime, and the cuts to these services have a disproportionate impact on young people who are also Black, disabled or LGBT+.

Youth services are very much based on the relationship between youth workers or youth support workers and young people. So cuts in members' jobs are extremely harmful to young people and communities.

Figures show that in areas where support for young people has been cut most brutally, they are more at risk of violence; and police services in these areas have also seen some of the highest knife crime increases.

A report by the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on knife crime and violence reduction showed a link between knife crime and budget cuts to youth services. It also demonstrated that trained youth workers can provide vital support for young people affected by violent crime, and identified effective interventions and initiatives.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to work with the Self-Organised Groups, the NEC and other service groups to:

- 1) Campaign against cuts to youth services and youth work jobs;
- 2) Promote previous work and research highlighting the links between youth service cuts and increased crime;
- 3) Work with Labour Link to make this a feature of our campaigns in local elections;
- 4) Work with the devolved nations to make this campaign a feature in elections to devolved parliaments.

Composite B (Motions 39, 41 and 44) Organising to Win

Carried

This conference notes:

- 1) The pandemic has posed union organising new challenges, with activists learning new tools and means to engage members;
- 2) Engaging members working from home, particularly non-members, remains challenging;
- 3) Some employers used the pandemic to attack pay, terms and conditions, some using fire and rehire tactics;
- 4) That despite the challenges, last year witnessed a number of sectional disputes across the UK where unions organised to beat the 50% ballot turnout thresholds, with many disputes securing wins for workers;
- 5) The UCU held national ballots on a disaggregated basis, organising to surpass the 50% ballot thresholds in many Universities;

- 6) That sadly, UNISON's national ballots fell well short of surpassing the 50% turnout threshold;
- 7) There are no UNISON training courses on how to organise industrial action ballots and win disputes.

This conference believes:

- a) Nationally, regionally and at a Branch level UNISON needs to beat the 50% ballot thresholds if we are to win for our members;
- b) Learning the organising methods from those ballots that do surpass 50%+ turnouts, from both local disputes and other trade union national successes is an urgent task for UNISON.

This conference resolves to request the SGE liaise and work with the NEC Industrial Action Committee to:

- i) Request that the SGE establishes a working group to examine and explore the organising methods used in both local and national trade union ballots, within the local government service group, that have surpassed the 50% ballot thresholds in recent times. For this working group to undertake this task to make findings and recommendations on which methods of organising are key to holding successful industrial action ballots in local government;
- ii) Request that the SGE seek to work with other relevant parts of UNISON to devise a UNISON training course for activists in local government on how to organise industrial action ballots and win disputes;
- iii) Request that the SGE seek to work through UNISON's structures to explore if there is a possibility of a co-ordinated all service group and UNISON wide approach to the actions in points i and ii.

40. Organising to Win

Fell

42. Black Members are Vital to Local Government Structures in UNISON.

Carried

Black members are still under-represented at branch, regional and national level in local government even though they make a significant contribution to the workforce in local government.

The trend that the National Black members are looking to change by working with the LGSGE and supporting initiatives to include Black workers across the service group.

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

Black workers have an important role to play in challenging racism, injustices and eliminating discrimination, fighting in-work poverty and equal pay. Their experiences and voices should be heard in local government campaigns.

Getting involved within the structures of UNISON local government and becoming active is essential for the development of campaign that impact on Black workers.

We call on the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Black Members Committee to produce guidance and information specifically on how to increase the number of Black members active in local government structures and encourage the implementation of fair representation at branch, regional and service group level;
- 2) Map where the young Black members are so we can direct training and engagement opportunities to that demographic.

Composite C (Motions 43, 45 and Amendment 43.1) Recruiting and Organising Young Members and Activists in Local Government

Carried

Conference recognises that young workers can make a real difference in local government branches by campaigning on the issues that affect them directly. Insecure/precarious work, zero hours contracts, training, discrimination, workplace rights, pay and conditions, mental health, and bullying and harassment are key issues experienced by young workers.

Young people are more likely to be in full-time education and working part-time alongside their studies. Their relative inexperience and the need for flexibility means that young people are more concentrated in low-paying jobs and their work is more unstable, with a greater use of zero-hours/temporary contracts.

Conference notes that during lockdowns, young workers of all ages experienced a fall in hours when furloughed or worked fewer hours on flexible contracts and their job prospects and pay had hit them hard. Young Black workers, young male workers, and those living in southern England, Scotland and Wales were more likely to have seen falls in employment. The Local Government Association (LGA) had seen a 22% drop in the annual number of apprenticeship positions offered within local government and said continuing financial pressures would reduce opportunities for young people in the short term.

Apprenticeships are a particular concern for young people. Noting the impact of the pandemic on young people's employment, UNISON's young members' conference in December 2021 carried motions calling for increased bargaining on quality apprenticeships, training, and internal development, and for the NEC to prioritise recruitment and development of apprentices and a campaign for improved pay and rights.

Conference notes with concern a noticeable and worrying shortage of young members and activists in UNISON and in Local Government. Young members represent just 5% of the whole UNISON membership and only 2% of activists.

This conference notes the continuing discrepancy between numbers of young members and numbers of young activists. Conference notes that RMS figures from February 2022 show that only 4.3% of members in the local government service group are aged under 27.

The role of the young members officer is the post least likely to be filled in a branch. Within local government less than 4% of members are under 27. There is a particular shortage of young members and activists in fragmented areas where organising is more difficult.

A UNISON survey of young members found that 70% of young members said they were not regularly active in UNISON. However, UNISON young members feel positive about the union and said they would like to take part in UNISON activities in the future but just did not know where to start. The findings also show that young women, young LGBT+ and young Black members were more likely to feel intimidated by UNISON or worried about what would be involved if they attended meetings or took part in UNISON activities.

Conference welcomes the work done so far by the Local Government Service Group Executive to recruit and organise young workers, including developing guidance on mentoring for young Black activists.

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

UNISON's Young Workers Charter, launched in November 2019, sets out five key pledges that local government employers should implement in workplaces so as to make a real difference to young people's working lives: a real living wage, fair employment, equality, training and development, and quality apprenticeships.

Conference believes to grow our union, we should focus on encouraging recruitment, organisation, and meaningful participation of young people who can provide a powerful voice for other young members in local government workplaces and gain the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge necessary to participate in all levels of the union.

Conference recognises that many UNISON members find their way into union activism through involvement in one of the self-organised groups (SOGs) and commends initiatives by SOGs which seek to increase participation by young members and to support and encourage them to become involved in the union beyond those groups. It therefore welcomes the establishing by the National LGBT+ Committee of a new national LGBT+ young members network and mentoring scheme for young LGBT+ members.

Conference recognises we need to consider new ways of organising and involving young people. For example, our offer to student social workers is based on what we can do for them once they graduate and are employed rather than while they are on their courses and placements and giving them a voice in UNISON as students. There is much to be learnt from the Health Service Group's organising of student nurses. The Northern region's model of organising student social workers gives students access to a UNISON social worker representative who helps them with any difficulties on their placements and courses.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young members and activists across the Local Government sector; to promote UNISON membership among young local government workers, encourage members to become active and support campaigns on the issues that are important to young members;
- 2) Encourage local government branches and regions to use UNISON's resources to recruit, organise, and increase meaningful participation of young people, particularly young Black, disabled, and LGBT+ members who remain underrepresented in UNISON and local government; including promote the NYMF's report "Getting Active in UNISON" to Local Government branches who want to develop a plan to increase activity by young members;
- 3) Survey branches across the sector to identify both challenges and success stories in developing young activists;
- 4) Encourage and support local government branches to develop mentoring and buddying schemes to support new young activists, including promoting UNISON's Learning and Organising Service's (LAOS) resources on mentoring and their own guidance on mentoring young Black activists;
- 5) Promote the new LGBT+ young member network widely within the service group and encourage young members to participate;
- 6) Work with the self-organised groups and the National Young Members Forum to promote existing learning resources on activist development, mentoring and buddying mentoring schemes across the service group;
- 7) Continue to promote the UNISON trans ally training widely within the service group and encourage young members to participate;
- 8) Work with regions, branches, and members of the Service Group sector committees to promote UNISON's Young Workers' Charter and encourage local government employers to sign up to the Charter;
- 9) Ensure that regions and sectors, in bargaining with national local government employers, promote the five priorities as set out in UNISON's Young Workers Charter;

- 10) Continue to monitor apprenticeship schemes within local government workplaces, recruit and organise apprentices in our branches and continue to push to get employers to sign up to the UNISON Apprenticeship Charter;
- 11) Encourage local government branches and regions to use UNISON's resources to recruit, organise, and increase meaningful participation of social work students and promote UNISON's Social Work Manifesto which sets out how we see the profession now and how we see it evolving in the years ahead.

MOTIONS NOT REACHED

6. Local Government Pension Scheme

Conference notes that UNISON is a longstanding supporter of the Palestinian people and was one of the first to respond to their call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

Conference therefore welcomes:

- 1) UNISON's publication of a revised version of "Palestine: Is Your Pension Fund Investing in the Occupation? A UNISON Guide to Engaging Your Pension Fund";
- 2) The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC's) launch of its "LGPS Divest Campaign" and its continuing work which has included research that found that Local Government Pension Funds have £4.4 billion invested in companies it describes as "complicit in the oppression of Palestinians"; and,
- 3) The United Nations' (UN's) publication of a database of companies involved in Israeli settlements and the call by the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Palestine, in a letter late last year to local authorities' Pension Committee chairs, to "accept their international responsibilities and extricate themselves from any direct or indirect involvement with the settlement economy".

Conference instructs the Service Group Executive, seeking the support of the National Executive Council and other Service Group Executives as need be and working with PSC where appropriate, to:

- a) Develop training and support to enable members and branches to act, in an effective and sustained way, in pursuit of the UNISON Guide's recommendations;
- b) Collect from regions and branches information about approaches to pension funds and the results of doing so; and,
- c) Report and circulate this information appropriately.

10. Young Workers, Burnout and the Right to Disconnect: The Negative Impact of Remote Digital Work on Young Members' Well-being During the Covid-19 Pandemic

This conference notes that even before the pandemic mental health and stress at work were among the leading issues raised by young workers.

Conference notes that the pandemic has only exacerbated young workers' concerns about mental health, whether that is due to working in stressful conditions on the front line, or due to isolation from friends, family and support networks. A UNISON survey of young members in 2020 found that over 87% of young members in local government said their mental health was 'seriously affected' or 'slightly affected' by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In particular, the huge rise in working from home in an era of digital connectivity has blurred the boundaries for many between work and home life, with a negative impact on wellbeing and work/life balance.

This conference notes that the right to disconnect is the ability to not engage in work-related electronic communications such as e-mails or messages during non-work hours.

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

Therefore, this conference asks the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to campaign and raise the impact of the right to disconnect on wellbeing with young members in local government;
- 2) Support branches in negotiating with employers to produce clear guidelines and policies on work/life balance and the right to disconnect, and consider producing relevant bargaining guidance;
- 3) Identify and share examples of successful negotiation in local government branches in agreeing policies which support positive work/life balance and staff's right to disconnect;
- 4) Promote UNISON's updated mental health bargaining advice to branches in the Local Government Service Group.

12. Ensuring the Health and Safety for Local Government Home and Hybrid Workers

Conference notes that as a result of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns by UK Governments, there has been a profound but long overdue move to the use of technology to facilitate home working. As we emerge from lockdown, we must be ready to deal with any new or additional risks to our members.

Since the end of these lockdowns, there has been a cultural shift with local government workers wishing to retain the opportunities to achieve a more effective work life balance with the introduction of hybrid working. Employers too have realised the potential benefits from increased productivity and cost savings.

Whilst hybrid working does bring about opportunities to improve work life balance, it also may come with hidden risks to workers' health and safety.

Conference notes that two of the U.K.'s highest causes of work-related absences are stress and musculoskeletal disorders, these risks are not diminished by hybrid working but have the potential to increase if the employer does not continue to meet their duty of care.

Home working is also invisible to the workplace regulator (the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland) and health and safety regulations, policy, guidance, and enforcement action must move with the times and be inclusive of this group of workers.

Whilst having the flexibility to work in a slightly different way it is important to remember that everyone is an individual and that one person's choice of flexibility in the time of day they work, could result in another person feeling pressure to respond outside of their normal working hours. This therefore has the potential to be a cause of stress and systems need to be put in place to prevent this. We need to ensure the mental health & wellbeing of our members continues to be a top priority.

Another area related to home working is the working environment itself, not just for the use display screen equipment which are a potential cause of musculoskeletal conditions if the risks are not correctly managed, but also other aspects of an employer's duty within traditional workplace, such as those covered within the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 which cover a number of issues including thermal comfort and lighting.

Unfortunately, whilst the employer may benefit from cost savings when changing to a model of home working, it is the employee who bears the full costs of the heating and utilities for their working environment. It is possible that workers will have seen an increase in these costs without any reimbursement from employers and whilst there may be the opportunity to seek some tax relief from Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HMRC), this is not an automatic process and may not cover the full increases experienced by members.

Conference fully respects and acknowledges that the role of determining policy and terms and condition negotiations sits firmly with each service group and its' democratic structures.

However, as these issues are not unique to any one service group, Conference believes that each would be aided in their steps to determining policy and approach to negotiations by the further development and expansion of both UNISON's bargaining guidance, and health and safety resources on these issues.

Therefore, we call upon the Local Government Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Seek to engage with local government branches and other service groups to identify their current experiences of hybrid and home working policies for negotiations, and then ask the appropriate UNISON departments to review existing guidance, and where needed, to develop new guidance and training resources which will also support organising around these issues within a fragmented workforce;
- 2) Lobby the workforce regulator to ensure that policy and practice and inspection activity picks up on employers' duties to protect home/hybrid workers;
- 3) Seek to engage with branches regarding any existing/future examples of where the employer has sought to make changes to job descriptions and evaluate these changes using relevant job evaluation schemes and/or have paid enhancements for home or hybrid working.

15. Food Standards Agency – Pay, Terms & Conditions

Conference notes that our members employed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) work tirelessly to make sure the public eat safe and clean meat, dairy and seafood. Their pay, terms and conditions need urgent improvement to reward that commitment.

Conference also notes the contributions FSA members and those employed as contractors working for Eville & Jones make towards protecting the UK from unsafe and unclean meat.

Conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to continue to defend our members' terms and conditions by:

- 1) Negotiating for higher wages for our members through collective bargaining;
- 2) Opposing privatisation and deregulation of meat hygiene inspection;
- 3) Opposing attempts to undermine the roles of our members working in food and promoting the Protect Our Food Campaign;
- 4) Raising the role of FSA members in the media through innovative new communication methods, e.g. animations, to inform and educate the public on what our members do in protecting the UK food chain.

19. No More Bad Pay Deals For Education and Local Government Workers

Conference notes UNISON members in Northern Ireland, like members right across the whole union, were disgusted with the paltry offer of 1.75% from NJC employers. These members rightly denounced this response as an insult to the thousands of education and local government workers across Northern Ireland, England, and

Wales who have held public services and education together during almost 2 years of a Covid pandemic.

Conference notes the declared intention of UNISON members in Northern Ireland to resist a continuation of low pay offers and their determination to work with the whole union to win a just pay reward.

Conference notes their determination that there should be no standing idly by and accepting crumbs from a Tory government. Our members deserve better and it is the job of the whole union to push forward for a better deal.

Conference also notes that UNISON Northern Ireland members are calling on the Education Authority (the main employing authority in Education in NI) to honour their commitment to undertake a pay and grading review. The goal on trade union side is to reduce the number of NJC spinal points which EA uses in its pay structure. While there is a willingness on the part of the EA management to respond, they blame a lack of funding from the NI Department of Education as a key impediment to making pay improvements.

Conference notes there is a very specific pay issue on the collapse of differentials between supervisory and core staff in cleaning and catering. UNISON NI has formally asked for an interim arrangement to address this issue. The region is responding to a growing exit of key supervisory staff from this workforce and have raised serious concerns of weakening sustainability of the workforce in these support services.

Conference notes, following consultation with members about stepping up this campaign, the region received an overwhelming mandate to take these issues forward.

Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Review our NJC pay strategy and to develop a campaign including industrial action as appropriate to secure a win for our members;
- 2) Support the regions specific strategy for a pay and grading review that delivers benefits for our members.

UNISON Northern Ireland

20. Free School Meals Campaign in Northern Ireland

Conference notes the Education Minister in Northern Ireland has announced an Independent Review of Education. This review will consider:

- 1) The education journey and outcomes of children and young people;
- 2) The support for schools and settings, funding and governance;

- 3) The system level design, delivery and administration; and
- 4) A vision of how education should be delivered in NI in the 21st century.

Conference also notes UNISON NI has set out its position. It is anticipated that the review will take 18 months, with an interim report available after 12 months.

To pursue the objectives of free school meals the region has established a campaign and this has three complementary objectives:

- a) Seeking universal nutritious free school meals for all pupils to both reduce poverty and improve public health;
- b) Safeguarding and promoting the vital work of our members within schools catering (school meals services should be publicly provided);
- c) As a response to Covid-19, building support for the implementation of a public health model across government that is aimed at dealing with health and educational inequalities that have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

Conference notes these objectives are supportive of actions being led within our bargaining structures – primarily in education, but also in health, taking into account the key public health implications of free school meals.

Conference notes the campaign has had a major impact on raising public awareness and the profile of nutritional free school meals as a poverty, equality and public health issue; has energised our members and assisted children and young people to realise their right to participate and have their voices heard on issues affecting them; and has caused politicians and policy-makers to engage with issues of poverty and child health and development.

The campaign is seeking commitments from all political parties to implement a universal approach to free school meals provision as part of the May 2022 Assembly election outcome.

In March 2021, UNISON NI launched the ‘All We Need is Lunch’ Art Competition as part of the wider Free School Meals campaign. Letters and materials were sent to every school and youth organisation in NI encouraging them to engage with children and young people on the issue of free schools meals, and asking them to support them to use the visual arts to explore what school meals means to them.

Conference therefore calls on the Service Group Executive to support this campaign. This could involve making available practical resources.

35. Fair Funding for Local Government

Two years on from expressing lofty ambitions on ‘levelling up’ across country, the government’s recent proposals have – yet again – demonstrated Johnson’s tendency to over promise and under-deliver.

A decade of Tory under-investment has been laid bare by the coronavirus pandemic. Research by UNISON has shown that councils across England, Wales and Scotland are facing a collective funding shortfall of £3,091bn by the financial year 2022/23. This is in part because a huge increase in expenditure was required to fight coronavirus.

Without proper investment in public services, forgotten communities simply will not prosper. Rather than setting out a blueprint for prosperity, Gove's report demonstrates the impact of a decade of Tory decline.

Prof Sir Michael Marmot, director of UCL's Institute of Health Equity, stated a key cause of our dramatic and avoidable falls in life expectancy has been the austerity of the last ten years. Given the scale of the problem, he believes the funding promised is tiny.

The north has long borne the brunt of Tory austerity. Local authorities have had their budgets cut by an estimated £15 billion overall since 2010 and received less in funding on average since 2018 than they received from regional development funds.

The Institute for Public Policy Research's 'State of the North' report demonstrates the scale of the problem. They have stated that the 2021 allocations of the Levelling Up Fund is an investment of just £32 per person in the north. This compares to a £413 per person drop in the North, and a £388 drop across England, in annual council service spending over the last decade.

In addition, the delayed Fair Funding Review continues to cause uncertainty for local government finances, making it exceptionally difficult for councils to plan for the long term. Consultation is set to take place early this year, but a 2020 analysis commissioned by the Local Government Association has already warned that communities in the north of England could see millions of pounds of funding taken away and given to more affluent areas.

Launched last year, UNISON's Save Our Services Campaign has raised awareness and lobbied MPs on the consequences of under-investment of public services. This work continues to be vital and UNISON Northern have worked closely with political leaders in calling for better funding for public services in the region.

This motion calls on the SGE to:

- 1) Further strengthen the fight against cuts to local government funding and the campaign for sufficient funding;
- 2) Develop more effective alliances with a range of outside organisations, such as the various local government associations, service user groups and political parties, to help secure equitable funding for local government;
- 3) Continue to raise support amongst the general public by putting across the damaging human consequences of the cuts to services alongside demonstrating the value of all local government services;

- 4) Work with politicians at all levels, including councillors, metro mayors and MPs to get them to take effective action to end the cuts to local government services;
- 5) Campaign to ensure the Fair Funding Review in England results in positive meaningful change for the allocation of local government funding.

35.1

In fourth paragraph, after “tiny.”, insert:

“Professor Marmot has also said “In the decade before the pandemic, improvement in health in the UK slowed dramatically, inequalities increased, and health for the poorest people got worse. This was all amplified by the pandemic” (Guardian 8 April 2022)”

After existing 6th paragraph, insert new paragraphs as follows:

“Further, public health services clearly have an important role to play in levelling up health. However, the Kings Fund has found that the public health grant from central government to local authorities was 22% lower in real terms in 2020/2021 compared to 2015/16. The public health grant allocation for 2021-22 amounted to a 24% cut per capita compared to 2015-16 budgets, according to the Health Foundation. England’s public health grant allocation for 2022-23, announced in February, is effectively another real terms cut, as it is based on inflation at 2.81%, while inflation currently stand at 5.4%.

Conference recognises that the years of public health grant cuts have had a direct impact on frontline public health prevention and treatment services, including sexual and reproductive health, health visiting and school nursing, tackling obesity, substance misuse, and HIV prevention and support. These services are disproportionately relied on by people – including LGBT+ and Black people - who experience gross health inequalities”

Insert new point 2 as follows, and re-number remaining action points accordingly:

“2) Strengthen the campaign for the Westminster government to restore public health funding to the level it was set in 2013 when public health transferred to local government, highlighting the impact that the years of public health grant cuts have had on frontline public health and prevention services;”

In existing point 3), insert “and public health services” after “local government services”

36. Better Funding for Local Government

Over the years there has been a significant shift in the way funding for public services provided by local government has been generated, with councils increasingly restricted in their ability to generate sufficient levels of funding to provide good quality public services.

Reductions in funding, during the period of austerity, has resulted in financial pressures which have impacted negatively on the quality and delivery of local public services resulting in cuts to jobs and services.

At the first reading of the Scottish government budget for 22/23 you could be forgiven for thinking that funding for local government had been greatly increased this year. But alas, that isn't so.

Scottish local government faces an almost 9% cut in revenue budget, which will make service delivery much more challenging. The Scottish government argue this is compensated for by the money councils get to carry out Scottish government policies from other budgets, e.g. education and social care. COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) estimate this budget means a £264m (2.5%) cut which fails to take account of inflation and demographic changes which put additional pressure on local services they are expected to deliver, rather than the significant increase in funding they needed following years of poor settlements. Indeed, official figures make clear that local government funding in Scotland has reduced by 12% since 2013/14 whilst the Scottish government's funding from Westminster has increased by 8% over the same period.

In Scotland we campaigned hard to raise awareness of this issue and the urgent need for local authority funding to be increased. It is disappointing that, for all their warm words about the importance of the work our members do, that politicians seem reluctant to put their money where their mouth is.

When you add in what is a proposed increase to capital funding - which is really a flat cash settlement needed to fund Scottish government priorities - it becomes a hit to both communities and growing the economy. You are left with a crisis for local government which is a long way from the rosy picture being painted in the media.

Cuts to local government budgets in other UK countries have been similarly brutal. The Local Government Association has stated that since 2010 councils in England will have lost 60p out of every £1 they had from central government to run their services between 2010 and 2020. Councils in Wales lost over £1bn in funding between 2010 and 2020, according to the Welsh Local Government Association, whilst public services in Northern Ireland have also experienced significant funding cuts. Recent very modest increases in funding to council services in these countries have not been enough to reverse the damage brought by years of budget reductions and means councils are forced to cut non-statutory services even further.

The Service Group Executive is asked to adopt the following recommendations for campaigning for better public service local government funding:

- 1) Recruitment of additional council, government and government agency staff to ensure that registration, regulation and collection of revenues is undertaken in order to identify where loopholes, avoidance and coverage has allowed some to escape making their fair contribution;

- 2) Call for an examination on whether the Small Business Bonus Scheme and other reliefs from non-domestic rates are fit for purpose and determine what alternatives could support private and social enterprises and other bodies more effectively;
- 3) Fair-work should underpin any reviews of income streams and/or taxation. Making relief subsidies and tenders dependent on good practices at the local level should raise revenues indirectly for Council budgets;
- 4) Governments, councils, trade unions and communities should explore how new taxes and levies can be introduced to support inclusive growth and the foundational economy. Attention should be paid to the opportunity for such initiatives to change behaviours and overcome negative externalities and market failures;
- 5) Consideration should be given to how municipalisation of buses, energy and other public services could be appropriately pursued. Local government should lead the way in the green economy by creating green jobs that put de-carbonisation at its core;
- 6) Explore how local authority debts and PFI/PPP contracts can be taken over by the Treasury, saving local government many billions in interest charges each year and so releasing tax revenues for investment in local economies and communities;
- 7) Consideration should be given to establishing a wide network of academics, stakeholders and interested parties in order to improve research and policy creation.