

Conference Bulletin

Police and Justice Service Group Conference 2022

April 2022

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Conference Team

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This bulletin contains the timetable and information for
2022 Police and Justice Service Group Conference.

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

The Police and Justice Service Group Conference 2022 will be held at the Telford International Centre, starting 9:30am on Thursday 20th October 2022, ending 5pm Friday 21st October 2022.

The Police and Justice Conference takes place over two days. The first session on Thursday and the second session on Friday consist primarily of debates on the motions submitted to conference. The second session on Thursday and the first session on Friday consists of plenary and workshop sessions on topics of relevance to the Service Group. All delegates and registered visitors may attend all sessions of conference but **voting on motions is restricted to branch delegates**. Delegates should attend all four sessions of Conference.

Telford International Centre
International Way,
Telford, Shropshire
TF3 4JH
Tel: 01952 281 500

Web: <https://www.theinternationalcentretelford.com>

Timetable

Deadline for Submission of Motions	12.00 noon	Thursday 30 June 2022
Publication of Preliminary Agenda		Friday 15 July 2022
Deadline for Submission of Delegates	5.00pm	Thursday 28 July 2022
Deadline for Submission of Crèche places	5.00pm	Thursday 11 August 2022
Deadline for Submission of Amendments	12.00 noon	Friday 19 August 2022
Deadline for Reasonable Adjustment requests for access	5.00pm	Thursday 8 September 2022
Publication of Final Agenda online		Thursday 22 September 2022
Deadline for Submission of Emergency Motions	12.00 noon	Thursday 13 October 2022
Deadline for Submitting Change of Delegates online on the OCS	11:59pm	Sunday 16 October 2022

Enclosed with this Conference Bulletin, and available for download on the conference webpage <https://www.unison.org.uk/events/2022-police-justice-conference/> are:

- Advice from Standing Orders Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you already have an e-mail address and access to the UNISON website, the quickest way to update your details is to go to the UNISON website and click 'My UNISON' – you will need your UNISON membership number.

If you don't have an e-mail address or don't have access to the UNISON webpage, you can contact UNISONdirect on 0800-0-857-857 and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON Membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.

Or, you can contact your local UNISON branch and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.

Key contacts:

If you have a 'My UNISON' registration issue: UNISONdirect on 0800-0-857-857

If you have an OCS issue, please contact your relevant regional contact:

Listed below are the Conference contacts for each region, who can also assist with online conference registration:

Region	Contact	Tel	E-mail
Eastern	Amanda Tickner	01245 608909	a.tickner@unison.co.uk
East Midlands	Colleen Forrest (Tues & Fri only)	0115 847 5468	c.forrest@unison.co.uk
	Katrina Grace (Mon & Tues only)	0115 847 5417	k.grace@unison.co.uk
Greater London	Shelley Davey Lorraine Tant Cally Thompson	0207 535 6648	glrconference@unison.co.uk
Northern	Linda Smith	0191 245 0852	l.smith@unison.co.uk
	Allison Jackson	0191 245 0805	a.jackson2@unison.co.uk
Northern Ireland	Elizabeth Robinson	02890 270190	e.robinson@unison.co.uk
North West	Kim Scott	0161 661 6777	k.scott@unison.co.uk
	Gillian Gorman	0161 661 6743	g.gorman@unison.co.uk
Scotland	Rosaleen Rodgers	0141 342 2816	r.rodgers@unison.co.uk
	Jean Fraser	0141 342 2880	j.fraser@unison.co.uk
South East	Claire Harvey	07545660341	communicationsteam@unison.co.uk
	Rob Bealey	07545661652	
South West	Jenn Gollings (Mon – Thurs only)	01823 285336	j.gollings@unison.co.uk
Cymru/Wales	Beverley Powell	02920 729475	b.powell@unison.co.uk
West Midlands	Claire Kenny	0121 685 3174	c.kenny@unison.co.uk
Yorkshire & Humberside	Laraine Senior	0113 218 2333	l.senior@unison.co.uk

Disenfranchised Branches

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

National and Regional Representation

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

- Regional Police & Justice Service Groups
- National Sector Committees
- National Self Organised Groups
- Private Contractors National Forum
- National Young Members' Forum

Branch Representation

The Police and Justice Service Group sets the ratio of delegates per member. Representation is based on membership at **30 September 2021**.

- Branches with up to 500 members are entitled to elect 2 delegates per 500 members or part thereof.
- Branches with over 500 members are entitled to elect 1 additional delegate per 500 members or part thereof.

Proportionality and Fair Representation rules are based on the NEC's Scheme of Branch Representation for National Delegate Conference.

- The total branch delegation, including any sharers, must be made up from the same proportion of women and men as there are in the membership of the branch.
- When calculating proportionality, each sharer counts as one delegate.
- If a branch is unable to elect enough women delegates to meet proportionality, then the women's places on the delegation must remain unfilled. This is consistent with the approach to proportionality taken elsewhere in the union.
- The third delegate seat to be reserved for low paid women members earning less than **£11.19** per hour.
- The fourth delegate seat to be reserved for a young member age 26 or under.
- Branches should strive to include members from all the sectors* their membership covers in their delegation, *i.e. police staff, probation, etc.
- If the delegation only comprises one full delegate, then this delegate may be male or female.
- Branches can send two people, in any gender combination, to share one of the delegate places. However:
 - a. If the entire delegation entitlement comprises of just the two sharers, then at least one must be female;
 - b. if they are sharing the low paid women's seat, both sharers must be low paid women;
 - c. if they are sharing the young members' seat, both sharers must be young members.

i.e. Sending one sharer to meet either the low paid women or young member requirement is not sufficient.

Late delegate registrations will not be approved. There will be no exceptions to this. The appeals mechanism in the regions is for the composition of delegations, not for late submissions. Regions must apply the deadlines strictly.

Monitoring for Fair Representation and Proportionality

All delegates will be asked to complete an **online form** which enables the Conference to be monitored in order that UNISON can check on progress towards its objectives of fair representation and proportionality at all levels of the union. This exercise is conducted at all UNISON conferences and at regional level. Hard copies will be available at the conference desk for those who prefer to complete a paper copy. **Please assist us by completing the online form before the end of conference.**

Transgender Members

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

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

Fitness to Attend Conference

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

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

Members should send a copy of the Fitness to Attend note to the Conference team in advance of the conference. This information will be treated with confidentiality.

Please help us to help the environment

We're doing our best to reduce the environmental impact of our conferences. We are providing all delegates with the chance to opt out of being sent paper copies of our conference materials as part of the delegates' despatch. All these documents will be available online via the conference app, and on the UNISON website. You can then download them onto your laptop or tablet to view online while you are at conference. If you wish to opt out, please indicate this on the 'My Requirements' screen options on the Online Conference System (OCS). If you do not opt out, you will be sent all documentation in hard copy form.

Language

The language we use is important and reflects deep-rooted and long-standing power structures and beliefs. Racist, disablist, sexist, transphobic, ageist, biphobic or homophobic language will not be tolerated. Generalisations are seldom helpful and seldom true: please avoid making them. Jokes or comments based on sexist, racist, disablist, ageist, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic ideas should not be made. Remember that some of us do not identify on the gender binary, so expressions such as 'sisters and brother' do not include us all.

Conduct of delegates

All delegates, visitors, staff and facilitators are expected to behave in a courteous manner. Aggressive, offensive, intimidatory, disrespectful or unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. This applies to all aspects of communication, at or in connection with the conference, including postings on social media. Complaints will be treated seriously.

*****IMPORTANT INFORMATION*****

My Requirements

Requesting 'Extras' such as Reasonable Adjustments or Personal Assistance on the Online Conference System (OCS) can only be done by the registered delegate themselves. Once a delegate is registered, the OCS will automatically send out an e-mail to the person with a web link which they can click on to access the OCS and input the My Requirements they require. For any assistance please contact your regional conference contact from the list in this bulletin.

Reasonable Adjustments

UNISON aims to provide a fully accessible event to disabled members in accordance with our duties under the Equality Act. Requests for reasonable adjustments must be submitted by **5pm, Thursday 8th September 2022**.

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

Please remember that BSL Interpreters will only be available if requested in advance.

While we work within the context of the social model of disability this does not mean that UNISON can automatically provide all resources that are requested as adjustments. We must consider the finite resources available both in terms of space and finances in order that we can balance our commitment to the social model with the resources available, and channel them to where they are needed most. Where resources are allocated, this is done on the understanding that the member will always use the resources whilst they are in the conference hall. Failure to do so may result in the resources being reallocated.

Members requesting seating, tables, footrests, which impact on the space available on the floor of conference, will be asked what barriers they face that require this adjustment for their participation.

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

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

We will apply a necessary cut off point for requests, as close as possible to the conference while not impacting on the requirements to produce regional seating plans in good time for advance circulation. The deadline is **5pm, Thursday 8th September 2022**. We will retain a limited ability to respond to unexpected circumstances that affect a delegate at short notice prior to the conference.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

If a delegate or visitor from your branch requires a PEEP for the conference venue, please ask them to indicate this with their online request.

Appeals

Regions monitor the delegations submitted by branches to ensure compliance with the scheme and proportionality and fair representation (gender, low paid female seat, young members' seat). Branches have a right of appeal against a decision by their region that their proposed branch delegation is not in line with this scheme – your regional admin contact (see page 3) can help you arrange a regional lay appeal.

Crèche and Babysitting

Please note that crèche provision is available **for delegates only** for children up to and including the age of 16 years. Arrangements have been made for Nipperbout, the company contracted to provide crèche facilities at all UNISON national conferences, to provide babysitting. Should you require this service please complete the request online by **5pm, Thursday 11th August 2022**. Delegates are reminded that the cost for babysitting is borne by the branch so authorisation is required from your branch secretary that this expenditure will be approved.

Change of Delegate

Branches may change delegates up to the start of Conference. A member registering as a substitute branch delegate must have been eligible to represent the branch at the closing date for registration of delegates **Thursday 28th July 2022**. Any changes must be in accordance with the Scheme of Branch Representation.

After **11:59pm, Sunday 16th October 2022** no change of delegates can be made on the OCS. If a branch needs to make an emergency change to its delegation after this date, then an 'Emergency Change of Delegate' form will need to be completed.

This form will be available on the UNISON website from **Monday 17th October** and will also be available from the Conference Desk at the venue.

Travel Arrangements

Please consider the impact on the environment when making your decision on how to travel to Conference.

Branches are asked to book all travel arrangements for Conference through Stewart Corporate Travel via email at unison@stewarttravelmanagement.com or call [0800 091 4272](tel:08000914272). Please advise Stewart Corporate Travel if your delegates have railcards.

Branches are reminded that:

- Travel costs for **Delegates and Sharer 1s only** will be funded from National Office.
- Travel costs for **Visitors and Sharer 2s** must be paid for by the branch. Please note that a booking fee is applicable – further details from Stewart Corporate Travel.

Conference Travel should be booked by the cheapest possible means.

Driving is discouraged for conference unless delegates are travelling together or as a reasonable adjustment. Total reclaimable will be the cost of standard tickets or cost of car travel – whichever is the lesser.

The 250 mile / upgraded or 1st Class travel rule is not applicable for conference travel

All travel requests (including upgraded or 1st Class Travel) as a reasonable adjustment must be reviewed and authorised by the Head of Conferences.

Accommodation

Booking accommodation – please book any accommodation required with a reputable provider with a generous cancellation policy.

Please ensure that members have written confirmation of any booked and paid for accommodation.

Arrangements for Distribution of Card Voting Booklet

Branches will collect card voting booklets on the first morning of Conference, before Conference starts, from the card vote collection point at **Telford International Centre**.

Advice on Submission of Motions

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

The **Preliminary Agenda** will be published online on **Friday 15th July 2022**. The **Final Agenda** will be published online on **Thursday 22nd September 2022**. The motions and amendments will also be included in the Conference Documents which are sent to all delegates in **September 2022**.

Prepaid Cards

Union Income Ltd have agreed to provide a corporate version of its prepaid card still with the UNISON branding. If your branch requires a prepaid card, then this is the card that is the preferred option above others generally available.

An application will normally take about **14 working days** to turnaround and you can request an information pack and application form by contacting:

UNISON Prepaid Plus Customer Services, 39-51 Highgate Road. London NW5 1RT or email customerservices@unisonprepaid.com

Credit Cards

If your branch does not specifically require a prepaid card the other best option is a credit card from Unity Trust Bank called Unity Corporate MultiPay Card. It is more flexible and is

linked to branch current account. Details of the Corporate MultiPay card and further information on how to apply are available from their website at www.unity.co.uk/multipay. To help branches switch to this Unity Trust credit card, the bank has agreed to waive the one-off administration fee of £50 for all current ALTO card customers who apply for a Multipay card.

Data Protection

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

2022 POLICE AND JUSTICE SERVICE GROUP CONFERENCE

ADVICE FROM THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

This circular sets out advice from the Police and Justice Service Group Standing Orders Committee on the submission of competent motions, amendments and emergency motions to the **2022 Police and Justice Service Group Conference**.

Please assist in the preparation of Conference by submitting motions and amendments in good time, and well within the specified deadlines.

How to submit a motion, amendment or emergency motion

Motions and amendments should be submitted electronically via the Online Conference System (OCS).

The date of the meeting which decided to submit the item should be recorded on the OCS, together with the type of meeting. Only the texts of motions which have been considered by the meeting are eligible for submission to Conference.

It is important to note that whilst local branch rules may include the delegation of powers to other bodies these will not be considered when applying the national rule requirements for Conference, instead a properly constituted and quorate branch meeting or branch committee must consider any motion. Therefore, branches must state clearly on the motion form the type of meeting at which their motion was agreed. Meetings must be quorate, and this may be checked, particularly for emergency motions.

Using the OCS, motions can be authorised at branch level by either the branch secretary or chair. The other will receive e-mail copies of the motion as soon as it is submitted. At regional level, the Regional Police and Justice Secretary will be authorised to submit the motion, with the Regional Police & Justice Chairperson receiving an instant e-mail copy. This process is replicated at national level for national bodies and their relevant secretaries and chairs.

All agenda items must be submitted prior to deadlines determined by the Rules. The dates will be notified by circular. It would be helpful to the SOC if submitting bodies could submit items as early as possible. The SOC advises submitting bodies not to schedule meetings too close to the deadline.

How to make sure your motion is competent.

Branches are often disappointed when motions are ruled out of order by the Standing Orders Committee because of a technicality, for example where the motion has been drafted in a way which conflicts with the UNISON Rule Book.

It is important that motions seek outcomes which are within the power of the body called on to take the action. In previous years some motions were ruled out of order by the Standing Orders Committee because they called for actions which were not within the union's power to deliver. For example, one such motion called on the Service Group Executive to achieve a speedy resolution to the pay negotiations. In this example it would have required the employers and the trade unions to reach an agreement. Had the motion

called on the SGE **to seek to** achieve a speedy resolution to the pay negotiations it may have been accepted onto the agenda.

Who can submit motions?

The bodies who can submit motions and amendments to the Police and Justice Service Group Conference are: Police and Justice Branches, Police Staff Branches, Probation Branches and Local Government Branches with Probation Members, the Police and Justice Service Group Executive, National Sector Committees and Regional Police and Justice Committees. Self-Organised Groups at national level and the National Young Members' Forum may each submit a total of two motions and two amendments to the Conference. Rule P.1.3.5 sets out Standing Orders advice on those bodies which are eligible to submit motions.

What can motions be about?

All motions, amendments and emergency motions submitted to the agenda for Police and Justice Service Group Conference must be relevant to the Police and Justice Service Group. Motions may instruct the Police and Justice Service Group Executive but may not commit the union nationally to a particular policy or campaign.

Motions for the Police Service Group Conference should come under the following areas:

- determining the Service Group's general policy;
- negotiating issues:
 - ✓ Pay and conditions of service
 - ✓ Professional and occupational rules, standards, conditions and policy
 - ✓ Industrial and other relations with employers to represent its members and participate in any joint negotiating machinery with powers in these matters
 - ✓ The settlement of any disputes arising from the employment of its members.

The Standing Orders Committee can only accept motions that are relevant to the areas of activity defined for Service Groups within Rule D.3.1.4.

What can't motions be about?

- **Staffing Issues**

Motions dealing with staffing matters are not appropriate for Conference debate. The National Executive Council and the General Secretary have responsibility for the employment of staff, under Rule D.2.10.1 and Rule D.2.10.2.

- **Political Funds**

Matters relating to the Labour Party, both in relation to internal issues and in respect of matters to be pursued at Labour Party Conference, are properly dealt with by the Affiliated Political Fund through its own structures, not Police and Justice Service Group Conference. The rules governing the Political Fund include both the Affiliated and the General Political Funds.

- **Watch out for Citizenship Issues**

Some issues, which initially may be relevant to the Police and Justice Service Group, may also be “citizenship” issues, of relevance to the whole Union because members experience them as workers and as members of the public. A good example is the funding of the Police Service – this issue affects all our members rather than just those employed in the Police Service and needs to be debated by the union as a whole. If you do submit a motion on a citizenship issue, please make sure that it only has relevance to Police and Justice Service Group workers. For example, a motion on PCSOs would be able to call for a campaign to improve the pay and conditions or training opportunities for PCSOs, but it could not call for a campaign for more PCSOs with more enforcement powers to improve public protection as this would be a National Delegate Conference matter.

- **Watch out for Industrial Action Issues**

Rule O gives exclusive power to the National Executive Council to authorise industrial action. To be lawful, industrial action must be in relation to a current trade dispute between an individual group of employees and their employer. Therefore, any motions relating to industrial action must not contravene Rule O or Rule B.4.5 Aims and Objectives “to perform such other duties and engage in such other business as a trade union may lawfully undertake.”

- **Watch out for language that could place the union in legal jeopardy**

Be careful about the language used in motions, in previous years motions have not been admitted onto the agenda because they could be considered defamatory about another party.

Other Important Issues

Motions relating to specific Groups.

Rule P 1.3.6 gives the Standing orders Committee the power to recommend to Conference that, as a result of certain motions only affecting devolved bargaining groups (i.e. Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales) voting should be restricted to those groups. It would be helpful if this could be noted when drafting motions so that it is clear whether the motion will apply to the whole Service Group or only certain groups.

Amendments

Amendments are subject to the same rules as motions as set out above. They should not be used to promote essentially alternative motions or as merely a substitute for voting against a motion. Therefore, amendments are likely to be ruled out of order (as wrecking amendments) if they:

- Introduce a direct negative into the motion;
- Reduce the motion to a mere re-statement of existing policy;
- Seek to change fundamentally the purpose of the motion.

Emergency Motions

Branches which submit emergency motions during Conference will have to provide the Standing Orders Committee with details of their branch rules covering advance notice for convening meetings and branch quorum.

Branches, Regions and Committees will have to show that:

- The matter couldn't be raised in debate on the agenda.
- The action called for is not covered by another motion, amendment or composite.
- The facts giving rise to the subject matter have occurred since the closing date for the submission of amendments to motions. (It is not sufficient that the branch was not aware of the facts until after the closing date.)
- The subject cannot be dealt with through normal channels other than Police and Justice Service Group Conference.

The motion should be submitted via OCS, in accordance with Rule P 11.2, and accompanied by an explanation of the reasons for the item not being submitted in accordance with the normal procedures and deadlines.

The same requirements apply to emergency motions as for motions, in particular the requirement that it has been considered by a properly constituted and quorate branch committee or meeting, even if it refers to events which take place after the deadline for emergency motions. The Standing Orders Committee will not take into account delegated powers within particular branches.

The strict application of these criteria will ensure that only matters of a genuine emergency to the Police and Justice Service will be admitted on to the agenda as emergency motions. The Standing Orders Committee will then timetable approved emergency motions for debate.

The Standing Orders Committee hope that these guidelines will be useful assisting Branches, Regions and National Committees in preparing motions for Conference and will reduce the number ruled out of order and we will do whatever we can to help you in the run to conference and at conference itself.