

Brighton Centre

29th October 2022 – 31st October 2022

Recruiting, organising, representing, and retaining members

1. SECURING THE LEGACY OF THE YEAR OF DISABLED WORKERS

Conference notes the success of UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers 2022 and places on record our thanks to all of our disabled members and activists who have driven this success throughout our union. Through this year, we have seen renewed focus on the experience of disabled members in our union, in the workplace and in society.

We have used the year to highlight the important contribution our disabled members make to the union, to improve terms and conditions for disabled workers and to campaign for improved rights for all disabled workers.

Yet, as the Year of Disabled Workers draws to a close, it is vital that the level of activity from the last year doesn't end as the union moves onto the next initiative. We need to ensure that activism amongst disabled members increases and that disabled members are visible at all levels in our union.

Conference acknowledges that tackling systemic and ingrained discrimination against disabled workers will take more than one year and we need to use the success of the year of disabled workers to continue our work and secure a lasting legacy for our members in all areas of our union.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with regional disabled members groups to fully evaluate the success of the year with an indicator of where activity has taken place and the range of stakeholders involved.
2. Work with regional disabled members groups to establish a programme of activities which build on the achievements of the year.
3. Work with service groups to follow up on the Year of Disabled Worker motions which have been passed by Service Group Conferences to deliver the bargaining agendas for disabled members.
4. Publicise UNISON's now regular online Disabled Members Officers and Contacts training to all branches and provide monitoring information for regions of attendees based on regions and service groups.

National Disabled Members Committee

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

1.1

After 4th paragraph Insert -

Conference believes that being disabled is not offensive, nor something to be ashamed of, and in a population where many more millions of people may end up disabled through ageing, accident or illness, we, as a union, need to promote the identity of disabled people as worthy, functioning, and capable members of society who often, with the support of reasonable adjustments, are able to lead fulfilling lives both personally and within the workplace.

Disabled adults need to be seen as positive role models so that disabled children can have goals and aspirations, alongside their non-disabled peers, and by reclaiming the words disabled and disability we confront and challenge the negative connotations that many people associate with these words.

North West Region

2. SMASHING ALL EQUALITY PAY GAPS

Conference notes that pay gaps affect large swathes of our membership regardless of service group or self-organised structures within UNISON.

Pay gaps measure the average hourly pay of a group of people with a 'protected characteristic,' such as women or Black workers, compared to the average hourly pay for men or white workers for example.

For example, according to government statistics:

- a) The disability pay gap was 13.8% in 2021, meaning disabled people get paid on average £1.93 per hour or £3,512 per year less than non-disabled people
- b) The ethnicity pay gap was 2.3% in 2019, but this masks significant disparities with the London ethnicity pay gap standing at 23.8%
- c) The gender pay gap was 15.4% in 2021, an increase on 2020
- d) There is very little official data about the LGBT+ pay gap but we know from a YouGov survey in 2019 that lesbian, gay, bi, and trans workers responding reported being paid an average £6,700 per year less than non-LGBT+ colleagues, a 16% pay gap. UNISON's experience is that trans workers are likely to be particularly impacted.

Younger workers are also more likely to experience low pay.

The pay gaps are even higher for people who have more than one protected characteristic, such as Black and disabled women.

It is important to note that equal pay is different to pay gaps. It is illegal to pay a worker less for doing work of equal value. However, pay gaps are more complicated and are more difficult to tackle.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) research indicates women, people from racial minorities and disabled people endure pay gaps due to barriers to accessing work and career progression.

In fact, pay gap reporting is a relatively basic indicator of inequalities in the workplace, in recruitment, promotion, training, and reward.

A big cause of the gender and disability pay gaps is that jobs offered on a part time basis are usually at the lower end of the pay scale and it is often women with caring responsibilities and disabled people who face barriers to working full time that have to do these jobs. There are also some jobs that are not valued by society and are often carried out by people who are more likely to face discrimination when they try to get a better job in another sector. The roles that aren't valued include jobs in care, catering, cleaning, admin and retail. Women, and disproportionately Black and migrant women, often do these jobs. These are some of the lowest paid sectors with the worst terms and conditions, driving the ethnicity and gender pay gaps.

Disabled people are entitled to reasonable adjustments by law under the Equality Act 2010 so that they don't face barriers at work. However, many disabled workers are refused adjustments or have to wait months or even years to get them. This makes it difficult for them to do their job and they often end up denied training, promotion and better pay as a result.

Discrimination is also key to pay gaps. Black workers are more likely to face unfair disciplinary action at work and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans workers can experience bullying and harassment. These workers can be denied opportunities to advance in their role just because they are Black or LGBT+.

Presently there are no requirements in the UK for employers to comment on, or disclose the ethnicity or disability pay data they hold.

Conference notes that UNISON's national Black members committee has publicly called for mandatory ethnicity monitoring. In parallel to this, UNISON has long supported mandatory disability pay gap monitoring and the Disability Employment Charter, of which UNISON is a founder member, includes this as a key ask.

Conference welcomes UNISON's new Quick Guide 'Bargaining on Pay Inequality - Pay Gaps: What they are and what your branch can do about them'. This includes helpful ideas on how to take action locally.

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

1. Work with UNISON's learning and organising services to seek to develop a training package explaining what pay gaps are and how to take concrete steps in the branch to make a difference.
2. Raise the disability and ethnicity pay gaps with regions, branches, and service groups so that the drivers of pay gaps can be included in local and national bargaining agendas with employers
3. Consider working with existing campaigns or developing a UNISON campaign to push for mandatory disability and ethnicity pay gap reporting

4. Publicise the new Quick Guide 'Bargaining on Pay Inequality - Pay Gaps: What they are and what your branch can do about them' to branches and regions.

National Black Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

3. MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING

'This Conference notes with concern the evidence that the last few years have shown there to be an increasing deterioration in good mental health of workers in public services.

This impact was significantly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic which saw people cut off from family, friends, and support networks. On top of this was the additional stress for public service workers of continuing to provide high quality lifeline services in high-risk situations due both to Covid-19 itself and a regular lack of effective PPE.

Conference notes that while we are entering another wave of Covid infections public service workers are also having to deal with various other stressors deliberately induced by this Tory Government such as huge work backlogs and waiting lists, poor staffing levels and under-investment, and low pay as breaks through into double digits while Governments across the UK hold down wages.

This Conference is appreciative of the work done by UNISON in highlighting the impact of poor mental health and in providing educational materials to help activists and members recognise and combat poor mental health as well as addressing root causes. This Conference also calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to take the following actions in the next year.

1. Recognise that poor mental health will disproportionately affect those already suffering from other disabilities.
2. To liaise with UNISON's Communications Department to encourage the publication of articles on how our union is supporting members who have been impacted on by poor mental health.
3. To work with our high-quality Learning and Organising Services to promote our excellent mental health training programmes, and continue to develop them, and work on encouraging branches and activists to take up such training.
4. To engage with our Service Groups and branches to encourage them to promote our bargaining advice and training packages with employers and encourage them to potentially work with employers in delivering joint training.

Lothian Health

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

3.1

Insert new third paragraph:

“Conference notes that women are about twice as likely to experience anxiety and depression compared to men. However, anxiety and depression are often not taken seriously by society and in the workplace”

In action point 1 add at end “, and in addition has a gendered impact”.

National Women Members' Caucus

3.2

In action point 4, after “Service Groups” insert “, including Service Groups in the devolved nations where bargaining takes place at a devolved national level, ”

National Disabled Members Committee

Negotiating and Bargaining on behalf of members and promoting equality

4. COVID-19 AND POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AMONG DISABLED WORKERS

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, is commonly associated with the Armed Forces, however, is a condition that can affect people who have experienced a psychological trauma and can amount to a disability.

It is a common mental health condition affecting about one in 20 people in the UK.

Epidemics such as Covid-19 typically result in trauma and while not everyone experiencing trauma will go on to develop PTSD, some are more predisposed. This includes:

- a) Those with existing mental health problems or disabilities including anxiety or depression.
- b) Those experiencing fear of infection, which includes those with health conditions that have required them to shield; and
- c) Those who have received critical care, which has disproportionately impacted on disabled people.

The trauma of PTSD requires longer term psychiatric and psychological treatment. However, to reduced costs in their Occupational Health Services many employers have made it more difficult to access face-to-face counselling services and the service level agreement they hold with OH services is likely to fall far below the long-term support required for PTSD.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members' Committee:

1. To commend employers who actively support emotional resilience in the workplace, including healthy lifestyles.
2. To call on employers to provide routine psychological debriefing for disabled employees who fall into the higher risk groups, identified above, who experience PTSD symptoms as a result of covid-related experiences.
3. To encourage employers to provide face-to-face counselling services as their default position for disabled employees within the higher risk groups, identified above, who experience PTSD symptoms as a result of covid-related experiences.

Scotland Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

4.1

Insert new fourth paragraph:

“The pandemic also saw an increase in domestic abuse and conference notes that violence, abuse and harassment of women can cause significant mental health problems including PTSD.”

National Women Members' Caucus

4.3

Insert new fourth paragraph as follows:

“Conference also notes that many disabled members provided public services throughout the early uncertainties of the COVID pandemic and have experienced many of the symptoms of trauma and PTSD.”

In action point 2 after “routine” insert “culturally appropriate” and after “debriefing” insert “provided by suitably qualified individuals.”

Insert new action points 4 and 5 as follows:

- “4. To publicise UNISON’s new model mental health policy to branches, regions and service groups.
5. To work with Service Groups and devolved bargaining structures to recognise as a matter of urgency that there needs to be significant investment in ongoing psychological support for disabled members who experienced the pandemic as workers, following the end of COVID funding from governments.”

National Disabled Members Committee

5. UNCOVERING THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON DISABLED MEMBERS

Conference, many of our disabled members feel anxious and concerned about returning to the workplace following the pandemic. They are worried that they are being left vulnerable to Covid 19 after the government removed legal restrictions and access to free testing earlier this year. Members who were previously considered clinically vulnerable, have not been afforded any extra protections in their workplace by the government.

This has placed many of our disabled members at risk of contracting Covid 19, when they are at greater risk of serious illness and long covid.

Conference believes that employers should be more understanding of the risks and concerns of their disabled workers and provide support for employees to be more aware of the impact of Covid on their disabled colleagues and encourage all staff to test regularly (offering testing kits where possible) and to stay away from work if they have symptoms or test positive.

We call upon the National Disabled Members Committee to work with relevant areas of the union to:

1. Conduct a survey of disabled members to ascertain their experiences of work in a post-covid world, the impact on their health and what support has been offered by their employers. For example – whether disabled members have been able to access hybrid working, whether specialist equipment has been easily obtainable for working from home, have managers carried out appropriate risk assessments for disabled workers.
2. To report back the survey findings via the regional delegates to National Disabled Members Committee
3. For National Disabled Members Committee to draft guidance documents for branches to use as bargaining and negotiating tools to help protect disabled workers in the workplace.

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

5.1

Insert new third paragraph:

“At the same time, for some disabled women workers, the workplace may be safer than their home due to the impact of domestic abuse, the incidence of which rose during the pandemic. This issue needs to be understood by employers when looking at hybrid and home working policies.”

National Women Members' Caucus

6. EFFECTS OF LONG COVID

Between 24 January 2020 and 9 March 2022 in England, the rates of deaths involving coronavirus (COVID-19) for both disabled and non-disabled people significantly decreased between the second (12 September 2020 to 11 June 2021) and third waves of the coronavirus pandemic (12 June 2021 to 9 March 2022), with rates falling below levels seen in the first wave (24 January 2020 to 11 September 2020).

In each wave of the coronavirus pandemic, age-standardised mortality rates involving COVID-19 for more- and less-disabled people of both sexes remained higher compared with non-disabled people.

When modelling the risk of death involving COVID-19, after adjusting for age, residence type, geography, socio-economic and demographic factors, health characteristics, and vaccination status, a significantly greater risk of death remains for all disabled people compared with non-disabled people; this remains largely unchanged across the three waves of the coronavirus pandemic.

Conference notes that aside of these terrible deaths, many thousands of our members are suffering from long covid.

Just recently a caretaker became one of the first people to win an employment tribunal for unfair dismissal after suffering with long Covid.

Scotland resident, Terrance Burke, was sacked in August 2021 after having to take extensive time off work due to the long-term side effects of the coronavirus. He took his case to an employment tribunal, arguing he was unfairly dismissed and long Covid should be classed as a disability.

In workplaces across our four nations, our members need the support through Reasonable Adjustments and Access to Work.

Disabled, Black and women workers who bore the brunt of caring roles during the main pandemic are now living with lifelong illness and life changing conditions and in need of support from employers and workplaces through Reasonable Adjustments and Access to Work, which has never been needed as much as it is today!

Conference notes, long covid is a condition characterized by long term consequences persisting or appearing after a typical convalescence period after having covid and has affected too many of our members.

Some symptoms can last a few months, but others are still on going and have lasted more than a year and should, if not already, be recognized under the Equalities Act as a disability.

Conference notes that hundreds of our members have been left with life changing illnesses such as heart defects, breathing difficulties, liver and kidney damage that will last a lifetime and the need for lifelong medication which may also have their own additional side effects.

Covid has destroyed and altered so many of our members lives forever.

Conference notes that some employers are still refusing to recognize the seriousness of this situation, especially for disabled members who already live with lifelong conditions and illnesses and may now need extra support at work

Conference notes that that it was our members who stood on the front line during covid putting their own lives at risk and who suffered the consequences.

Conference call upon the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work alongside other National Committees to share good practice where UNISON's own Covid-19 guide has been successful in workplaces.
2. To ensure that as an ongoing project that the Reasonable Adjustment guide, policy, and the passport are regularly reviewed and updated by the committee to keep up with the changes during the continued covid mutations.
3. For the National Committee to work with Labour Link in lobbying and campaigning for Long Covid to be recognized as a disability under the Equalities Act and not have to wait for 1 year to be considered.

Haringey UNISON Local Government Branch
National Disabled Members Committee policy: DEFER

6.1

Insert new ninth paragraph as follows:

“Conference further notes that Black workers, often in low paid and frontline work, were twice as likely to get Covid in the first place and by extension are more likely to experience long Covid. This can exacerbate the often-hidden impairments many Black workers already have, such as Lupus and Sickle Cell Thalassaemia. For some women with long covid this has meant the early onset of menopause or increased issues around menstruation, and this can be worse for some Black women.”

National Black Members' Caucus

7. ACCESS ALL AREAS: ADDICTION SERVICES THAT ARE OPEN TO ALL

Conference notes that drug and alcohol addiction can happen to anyone. Disabled and Deaf people can also become addicted to drugs and alcohol. However, for many Deaf people who become addicted, there is nowhere to turn for help. The services that exist are already overstretched and underfunded but added to this they are very unlikely to be accessible to Deaf people.

Those services and charities that do exist often don't provide information in British Sign Language and don't offer counselling or other interventions in BSL

This leaves many Deaf people to struggle alone with their addiction. This can of course have a knock-on impact on their working life, whether through sickness absence, performance issues or disciplinary action.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Campaign for increased funding for accessible drug and alcohol addiction services
2. Raise awareness of the impact of addiction in the workplace, review existing guidance and consider whether there is scope for further resources for our stewards who may be supporting Deaf and disabled members experiencing drug and alcohol addiction.

National Deaf Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

7.1

Insert at end of second paragraph: "Services where they exist are also often built around the needs of men, based on outdated stereotypes of addiction, and don't offer much for often female family and carers of people who have problems with addiction."

In action point 1, after "accessible" insert "and inclusive".

National Women Members' Caucus

7.2

At the end of the second paragraph insert "In some Black communities there is a stigma around disclosing issues with addiction and services that do not address this can be a barrier to some Black Deaf and disabled people accessing help."

National Black Members' Caucus

8. ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Conference is concerned about the growing impact of mental health problems on Deaf people. This problem has increased because there are simply not enough accessible mental health services. Deaf people who live in rural areas have almost no chance of finding accessible mental health services that don't require a long and difficult journey.

Conference welcomes the work of SignHealth but notes that it is only able to deal with a portion of the need due to lower than required levels of funding. This has led to an unacceptable postcode lottery for Deaf people with mental health problems.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with the Health Service Group to call for improved funding for accessible mental health services
2. Lobby the Labour Party, via the Labour Link, to commit to significantly increased funding for accessible mental health services and those targeted at Deaf people in particular
3. Continue to support SignHealth and to encourage union reps to signpost members in mental health need to them where appropriate

8.1

In action point 1 after “accessible” insert “and culturally appropriate”.

National Black Members' Caucus

9. WORKFORCE DISABILITY EQUALITY STANDARD

Conference, while we welcome the introduction of WDES, the Workforce Disability Equality Standard, in the National Health Service (NHS) and the fact that Unions are a stakeholder on equal footing within this plan, it is of concern that many Branches may not be aware of how their Trusts are acting upon this information. At a Health Fringe event during 2019's National Disabled Members Conference only 6 delegates from over 100 had heard of WDES. Fast forward to 2022 Health Conference and when asked by a speaker on WDES, only 24 out of approximately 900 delegates raised their hands indicating that they knew their employer and their Branches were actively working in partnership on WDES.

Within our trust, Cumbria Northumberland Tyne and Wear (CNTW), a large mental health trust, we welcomed the setting up of a Disabled Staff Network. As a Branch we have worked for many years to raise the profile of our UNISON disabled members. However, in our Trust's Equality and Diversity Committee we see a slow erosion of UNISON's role as a stakeholder and a divide between the Network and our unions.

Often our disabled members are going to the network to raise concerns, but there is a clear difference in the roles of Networks and unions. Although there is a place for both in raising the disabled worker's voice, it is the role of unions to represent and negotiate reasonable adjustments. UNISON must remain the driving force behind this.

It is essential that our disabled members have that voice across all our service groups and that a strategy is developed to improve our coordination and communication to our disabled members.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with the Health Service Committee to collate where we are at with the WDES at this point across all our Health Branches reflecting the information gathered from the Employers on WDES.
2. To ensure the pathways from the People Plan and WDES are clear in the administration of the benefits to disabled workers.
3. Work with LAOS to ensure that training reflects these changes within the cross working of the service groups and embedding of said self-organised groups in ever changing world of partnership working.

North Cumbria Northumberland & Tyne & Wear Health
National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of Members

10. DISABLED PEOPLE AND THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

Conferences notes the cost-of-living crisis which will disproportionately impact on disabled people.

Even before the pandemic, disability related expenses or the 'disability price tag' was on average £583 extra per month compared to non-disabled people, according to the 2019 Scope Disability Price Tag report. One in five faced extra costs of more than a £1000. Over a half of disabled adults worried about how they would afford to pay their bills.

More than a decade of Conservative cuts to Local Government funding have also led to increased social care charges for disabled people.

This alongside the current cost of living crisis, with a National Insurance rise, food and petrol prices trebled, frozen tax allowances and fuel bill average rises of £686 per annum, means that most people will suffer, but disabled people even more so.

Disabled people are twice as likely to be unemployed and our income has fallen in real terms with benefits payments, including in work benefits many low paid disabled workers rely on to make ends meet, failing to keep up with rocketing inflation, meaning disabled people can afford less than ever.

Disabled people are also about to also lose their warm homes discount, added to the fact that many rely on energy not just for heating but for powering specialist lifesaving equipment such as oxygen machines, or equipment vital to achieving independence such as electric wheelchairs. These are unavoidable costs that can't be cut back so disabled people's bills will inevitably increase, along with their social isolation. This will not just mean a choice of heating and eating but for some breathing.

Some disabled people have impairments that are impacted by cold and need to spend more on heating their homes to avoid pain – they are therefore doubly susceptible to increases in energy prices. Additionally, there has been a massive increase in disabled workers working from home or hybrid working since the pandemic. Many of these workers will have reasonable adjustments at home, such as assistive technology or additional devices which require frequent charging and add a "cost of disability" to their already increasing utility bills.

A report from Leonard Cheshire released in April 2022 found that:

- a) 55% of disabled people feel anxious, depressed, or hopeless due to the financial difficulties they are experiencing
- b) Around a quarter had missed meals (25%) or not heated their homes (28%), while around a third (30%) had to ask for financial help from friends or family.
- c) A third of those surveyed said they have £50 or less to live on a week.

Conference further notes this research found that over half million disabled people (7%) are already living off just £10 a week after bills. It is just not acceptable for the sixth richest economy in the world to subject people to such poverty living.

Disabled Women will face a double whammy, with just over half in paid employment and for those with certain impairments the disability pay gap is as large as 18.9%.

Conference welcomes the £150 cost of living allowance for disabled people, but one-off payments are just a drop in the ocean. Few people receive the maximum payment for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Simply put one size does not fit all. With inflation now running at 9%, this will wipe out any benefit increases and will ultimately cost lives.

Conference therefore calls on the national disabled members committee to:

1. Raise awareness of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled people across the union and ensure that these issues are highlighted as part of UNISON's national campaigning on the issue
2. Seek ways of feeding into the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and the National Disability Strategy committee that has formed a new task force to better understand the additional expenses and extra costs faced by disabled people
3. Lobby the Labour Party, via the Labour Link, to commit to the reform of PIP to accurately capture the extra cost of being disabled and to help disabled people to live independently
4. Campaign to end the Disability Pay Gap and for mandatory publication of the pay gap
5. Promote the Disability Employment Charter as a way of improving disabled workers' income through better access to reasonable adjustments, Access to Work support and supporting disabled people into good quality employment

National Disabled Members Committee

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

10.1

At the end of paragraph 10 insert: "Black disabled workers also face additional difficulties. These workers are more likely to be on low income and zero hours contracts and may face additional costs in accessing culturally appropriate consumables. For migrant workers there is the additional cost of navigating the government's 'hostile environment'."

National Black Members' Caucus

10.2

In the paragraph that starts "Disabled women" insert at the end: "Disabled women are more likely to be low paid and in precarious employment, making them especially vulnerable to price rises. Changes to the benefits system under successive Tory-led

government have also seen an assault on financial independence for women, with payments less likely to be paid into a female partner's account. Women are also more likely to be unpaid carers, with less of an ability to work longer hours to get through the current crisis."

In action point 1, after disabled people insert "including disabled women".

National Women Members' Caucus

11. DISABILITY PAY GAP

Conference is concerned about the widening disability pay gap and the impact on our Disabled Members. The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that on average disabled people are paid almost 14% less than non-disabled people.

Further analysis of the data shows that the type of disability also impacts on the pay gap. The gap for people who say their day-to-day activities are limited a lot is 20% while people with autism are paid, on average, a massive 33.5% less than non-disabled people.

The disability pay gap is consistently wider for disabled men than disabled women. For example, men with epilepsy experience a pay gap of almost 40% (around 20% for women with epilepsy). This could, to some extent, be due to non-disabled men earning more than non-disabled women but it is important to recognise the different gender issues when tackling the disability pay gap.

Conference disabled people, including our Disabled Members, earn on average £2 an hour less than their non-disabled colleagues. Disabled employees work the equivalent of two months, that's over a day a week every single week, for free.

Almost 10 years ago the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported that at the current rate of progress the disability pay gap in the UK would never end. Since then, the gap has continued to widen.

Generic initiatives aimed at increasing income and reducing pay gaps, such as the national minimum wage, have had no impact on the disability pay gap. The latest data available (2017) shows only 3% of employers monitor the disability pay gap. Without evidence tackling the disability pay gap is almost impossible.

Conference instructs National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with signatories to the Disability Employment Charter and other trade unions to launch a campaign to require all employers with over 250 employees to publish annually:
 - i. The number of disabled people they employ as a proportion of their workforces
 - ii. The percentage of disabled people they employ at each level of the organisation

- iii. The disability pay gap in the organisation
- 2. Carry out a survey of members or include a question in the equality survey to identify how the disability pay gap impacts on our Disabled Members
- 3. Promote Disability Pay Gap Day every year to raise awareness of the disability pay gap
- 4. Work with Labour Link to lobby the Labour Party to include Disability Pay Gap monitoring in their next manifesto.

Northern Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

12. MEN AND MENTAL HEALTH

Conference suicide is the biggest cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. In 2020, 75% of those who took their own lives were male. 4,880 men and boys died by suicide, that equates to 12 deaths every day of the year.

While people of all genders can experience mental health problems stigma and gender stereotypes mean men's mental health issues are often go unnoticed.

Societal norms can make it harder for men and boys to admit when they're struggling to cope. They see mental health issues as a sign of weakness, they don't talk about their problems with their family or friends, and they don't seek professional help.

According to the Mental Health Foundation men who don't talk about their emotions are less likely to recognise symptoms of mental health issues in themselves. Men will throw themselves into work, turn alcohol or drugs, and even go missing rather than ask for help with their mental health.

Surprisingly the pandemic didn't have as adverse an impact on mental health as was expected and suicide and self-harm rates amongst men falling slightly. Research suggests this may be because resilience is a common human response during times of adversity. Unfortunately, rates have already returned to pre-pandemic levels.

For too long male mental health has been ignored and not talked about. Symptoms such as irritability, loss of control, risk-taking and sudden bouts of anger are written off as a mid-life crisis when they're actually a cry for help.

Our mental health can impact on our ability to function and can be classed as a disability, but we know that many of our members, particularly our male members, still struggle to get the help and support they need.

We recognise that for shop stewards and reps asking a member about their mental wellbeing can be hard. And if the question is asked, more often than not, our male members will say they're fine or brush the question aside rather than ask for help.

Conference, we can't force men to get help, but we can let them know that support is available and that talking about mental health is a sign of strength not weakness.

Conference instructs National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC and Service Group Executives to:

1. Develop and deliver a campaign to raise awareness of male mental health issues
2. Use International Men's Day on 19 November to promote positive action related to men's mental wellbeing
3. Provide details of organisations that can help men struggling with mental health issue on the UNISON website
4. Consider whether the safe place referred to in motion 121 which was passed at National Delegate Conference could be extended to include a safe space where men can discuss and share their experiences of mental health

Northern Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

12.1

In action point 4 after "to include a" insert "separate".

National Women Members' Caucus

13. TRANSPORT: GOVERNMENT FAILS AGAIN

Conference, using public transport is a major issue for Disabled Members. There are countless barriers to accessing trains, buses, taxis, and any other kind of public transport you care to mention.

Last year the government set out their plans for making transport more accessible in their National Disability Strategy. They claimed they would 'improve the accessibility and experience of everyday journeys' but, in reality, it's no better than the rest of the strategy that the courts ruled unlawful.

They said they would transform the accessibility of the railway network; improve the accessibility of buses, bus stations, bus stops, taxis, and private hire vehicles; and make lifeline ports more accessible for disabled passengers. What they said and what they did turned out to be very different.

In January, the government gave the transport industry a fourth legal exemption which means that inaccessible vehicles can be used to replace rail services for another nine months. In July they said they were extending the exemption again and allowing inaccessible coaches to be used for school transport for disabled children.

In March, Department for Transport (DfT) research found that the current 'wheelchair standard' used in the transport sector is only large enough to cover around half of mobility aids used by disabled people. Instead of introducing new standards the government said, "there are trade-offs between making transport accessible and the practicalities for transport operators."

In June, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, told MPs that the work to instal tactile paving in train stations would be finished shortly. This would be a major safety improvement for blind and visually impaired people if what was said was accurate. It turns out that 40% of stations don't have the tactile strips. The government refused to bring forward the 2029 completion date despite an inquest finding the lack of tactile markings had played a part in a disabled man's death.

The failure to make public transport accessible has left many Disabled Members with no choice but to travel by car but that option isn't always easy either.

Electric vehicles might be good for the environment but unfortunately many don't meet the needs of disabled people and with the ban on petrol and diesel cars coming into effect in 2030 life is going to become increasingly difficult for disabled drivers.

The government have also failed to standardise electric vehicle (EV) charging points or make them accessible for disabled people. Plans to categorise EV charging points as 'fully accessible', 'partially accessible' or 'not accessible' aren't particularly helpful if there is no requirement to make any EV charging points accessible.

And with more and more councils either imposing restrictions on the use of Blue Badges or charging disabled people to park even if they have a Blue Badge, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Disabled Members to drive anywhere including, in some cases, to work.

Conference it is a disgrace that the barriers that prevent disabled people travelling are just as bad, if not worse, than they were when the Disability Discrimination Act that was supposed to change our lives became law over 25 years ago.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC and any other body it feels appropriate to:

1. Raise awareness of the difficulties disabled people face when travelling on public transport
2. Write to the Secretary of State for Transport and Shadow Secretary of State for Transport to call for the deadline for tactile strips to be installed in all train stations to be brought forward to 2024
3. Campaign for the end of extensions that allow public transport operators to continue using inaccessible vehicles
4. Lobby for a minimum of 50% of all EV charging points to be accessible EV charging points
5. Campaign for all publicly owned car parks, including at hospitals, to be free of charge for Blue Badge holders

Northern Region
National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

13.1

Instruction Point 4 to be amended from:

‘4. Lobby for a minimum of 50% of all EV charging points to be accessible EV charging points’

To

‘4. Lobby for all EV charging points to be accessible EV charging points’

North West Region

13.2

In action point 5 delete “publicly owned”.

National Disabled Members Committee

14. SAY NO TO A BILL OF RIGHTS THAT REDUCES DISABLED AND LGBT+ RIGHTS

Conference notes that the Conservative government has declared their intention to replace the Human Rights Act 1998 with a new Bill of Rights which they introduced to parliament on 22nd June 2022.

The Bill of Rights would repeal the Human Rights Act (HRA), which directly incorporated into domestic British law rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The convention rights incorporated into UK law through the HRA were ratified by 46 member states (including the UK) of the Council of Europe, the leading European human rights organisation. This set of rights was developed during the second world war to ensure governments could never again abuse individuals’ rights.

Disabled people and LGBT+ people rely on the Human Rights Act and the Convention Articles to protect hard won rights. Many disabled people have only been able to enforce their rights to independent living, to accessible public services and to a private life by taking legal action using the Human Rights Act. If the Act is repealed this avenue will no longer be open to us.

Article 14 states: “the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such a sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.” The courts have interpreted “other status” to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability, sexual orientation, transgender, and HIV status as part of their remit to treat the Convention as a “living document”. Clause 3 (3) of the Bill of Rights gives the courts the right to re-interpret Convention rights more restrictively, by reference to the preparatory work that preceded the agreement of the Convention in the atmosphere of the later 1940s. (Clause 3 (2)).

Many critics have pointed out that the new legislation will be the first bill of rights that will actually reduce people's rights. Conference believes that it is a right-wing ideological attack on human rights that will disproportionately impact the most marginalised in society, including disabled and LGBT+ people.

The Ministry of Justice, in the consultation "Human Rights Act Reform" (December 2021) in Appendix 1 argued that domestic legislation, in the form of the Equality Act 2010, covers the provisions of Article 14. However, the Equality Act was underpinned by European Union law in the form of the Equal Treatment Directive. Brexit will now allow Parliament to amend primary legislation such as the Equality Act without reference to EU law, and the Bill of Rights will prevent the courts from using Convention rights to override parliamentary will. Hard won disability and LGBT+ rights will now be dependent on the whim of Parliament.

The Conservative government uses disingenuous arguments and weasel words to try to claim the new Bill of Rights will restore the primacy of the UK parliament when in fact it will give the government more power to act with impunity, without protest, and without oversight.

The proposed Bill marks a dangerous reduction in rights as follows:

- a) It will allow the UK courts to ignore long established case law on equalities issues from the European Court of Human Rights, putting disability and LGBT+ equality back decades.
- b) It will stop the European Court of Human Rights granting injunctions, such as the one against removal flights to Rwanda granted in Spring 2022, even though Rwanda is not a safe place to be LGBT+.
- c) It will allow the Government to increase the use of prison Separation Centres and stop any legal challenge, expanding the state's powers against those who are least able to speak up for themselves.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1. Raise awareness of the threat the Bill of Rights poses to the HRA and to LGBT+ and disabled people's rights and work with the Labour Party, via the Labour link, to seek to raise these issues in the UK parliament
- 2. Campaign with appropriate bodies calling for the withdrawal of the bill

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

14.1

In the fourth paragraph, replace "Disabled people and LGBT+ people" with "Disabled people and Black and LGBT+ people" and at the end of the paragraph insert "The Human Rights Act is a crucial safeguard against the hostile environment this Tory government has created for Black people."

National Black Members' Caucus

15. LONG COVID AND ACCESS TO PIP FOR BLACK DISABLED WORKERS

Conference notes the news article published in the Guardian newspaper on the 13th of June 2022 which stated that according to the Office for National Statistics, as of 1st of May an estimated 2 million people in the UK reported having Long Covid, as the condition is known.

Conferences notes that Unison Black disabled members have been on the frontline in the fight against Covid and have been instrumental in ensuring that vital public services could continue during the pandemic. This has meant that they have been more exposed than most to the physical and mental impact of Covid. The figures for people with long Covid make it clear that Long Covid will continue to be a massive threat to disabled Black workers.

There is also an issue for people with Long Covid who are being turned down for Personal Independence Payments that should allow them to live independently.

Conference further believes that those suffering from Long Covid should not be subject to normal sickness absence process and triggers but should be supported through disability leave and reasonable adjustments. Flexible working should also be offered as well as workplace adaptation in the workplace or at home if they are doing hybrid ways of working.

Conference notes with disappointment that on 9th May 2022 the Equality Human Rights Commission tweeted that workers with Long Covid were unlikely to be disabled. This is a clear misrepresentation of how Long Covid should be considered under the Equality Act 2010. Our General Secretary has written to the EHRC raising concerns that they are misrepresenting the Equality Act.

The Equality Act 2010 in the main does not specify if an impairment is a disability or not. A person is disabled under the Act if they have a physical or mental impairment that has lasted or likely to last for a year or more and which has an adverse impact on their normal day to day activities.

Conference believes many of our Black disabled members with Long Covid are therefore disabled people and should be entitled to both reasonable adjustments and PIP.

Conference notes that PIP is not a means tested benefit. Although the Department of Work and pensions does not collect ethnicity data for PIP claimants, based on anecdotal evidence we have long believed that a disproportionate number of claimants refused PIP are Black disabled people. Critics have said the test is inherently flawed and capricious, and especially unreliable when assessing fluctuating conditions such as mental health illness.

Conference notes that in written evidence to a recent parliamentary inquiry on the quality of PIP assessments the Long Covid Support charity labelled the PIP process “unfit for purpose” and called for it to be overhauled to reflect the breadth and complexity of the condition’s symptoms. This has caused a significant slowdown in the

physical and mental wellbeing recovery of people in the UK living with Long Covid. It has left thousands of frontline Black disabled workers with a debilitating condition after being exposed to the virus while protecting this country.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Support Unison's work through the TUC on the industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) to recognise Long Covid as an occupational disease including calling for government funded research into work related exposures, risk and disability
2. Campaign through Labour Link to promote the need for long Covid to be recognised as an occupational disease
3. Re-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" and that they should be granted access to PIP
4. Ask regions and branches to raise these issues with employers as a priority in ongoing negotiations, so as to seek to get reasonable adjustments for those with Long Covid agreed and included in relevant policies and procedures
5. Liaise further with the EHRC to seek to ensure their advice on Long Covid is in line with the Equality Act 2010.

National Black Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

16. TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE WOMEN'S HEALTH STRATEGY

Conference notes the December 2021 government policy paper 'Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England', published after 100,000 women shared their personal experiences around the way the health and care system listens to women. The document looked at the approach to women's health by putting women's voices at the heart of this work.

The policy paper was based on information and the voices of women, in addition to building on two previous reports. A 2020 report, the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, played a vital part in the recommendations in the report. We have all heard about the failure of testing of the vaginal mesh which has led to women being left with impairments for the remainder of their lives. A further 2020 independent report into the issues raised by Ian Paterson, a former surgeon, was also crucial. This report found 'it is often women whom the healthcare system fails to keep safe, and whom systems fail to listen to'.

Conference believes that there is not a woman who won't recognise the need for a Women's Health Strategy, after decades of gender health inequalities.

The 'Vision' document contains evidence around health in the workplace, with the report highlighting that health conditions and impairments impact on women at work, leading to increased stress levels and mental health impacts. It calls on employers to look to flexible working arrangements. This should not be confused with any reasonable adjustments in place for disabled women.

Conference acknowledges the long struggle disabled women have within employment and the impact of the disenabling elements that come with periods, menopause, endometrioses to name a few conditions that for women can be extremely painful and cause extra time away from work. This is in addition to dealing with the impact on other impairments and ever-increasing comments like 'It's Just A Women's Thing'.

While on average women in the UK live longer than men, women spend a greater proportion of their lives in ill health and disability. This is on top of growing geographical differences and disparities between different groups of women in how they access services.

Doctors' routine dismissal of women's debilitating health problems as "benign" has contributed to gynaecology waiting lists soaring by 60% to more than half a million patients. Dr Edward Morris of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said institutionalised gender bias meant the term "benign" was used more widely in gynaecology. resulting in conditions being normalised and deprioritised within the NHS.

Disabled women are also more likely to have unmet health care needs than non-disabled women or men.

Conference welcomes the work towards producing a women's health strategy in light of the need to improve the health of all women and girls and to build an approach to women's health that is inclusive of LGBT+ and Black communities. Changing what is an institutionalised culture will not be easy but there are no 'quick fixes' we can take that would risk the health of women.

For our part as a union, we need to ensure that we negotiate robust guidance and inclusive sickness policies. Conference notes UNISON has produced a guide to negotiating disability leave which includes a model policy and we also have guides to negotiating good sickness absence policies and procedures.

Ensuring disabled women members in workplaces are supported is even more important in the light of NHS waiting lists that have increased dramatically due to Covid and mean disabled women are not getting the help they need and are having to take time off sick as a result.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Work with the health service group to seek to ensure disabled women's voices are included in all phases of the development and implementation of the Women's Health Strategy
2. Work through the Labour Link to seek to ensure the Labour Party holds the government to account on addressing women's health inequalities
3. Raise awareness of these issues across the union and consider backing appropriate campaigns for action
4. Continue to produce and circulate guidance on negotiating sickness absence policies and disability leave

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

16.1

Insert new ninth paragraph as follows: “Conference notes that Black women face further health inequalities. Black British women are five times more likely to die in childbirth than white women. A recent review by the NHS Race and Health Observatory found that Black people were less likely to receive good mental health care in particular, and in terms of maternal healthcare it found evidence of negative interactions, stereotyping, disrespect, discrimination and cultural insensitivity, leading to some Black women feeling ‘othered’, unwelcome, and poorly cared-for.”

In action point 1 insert at end “including lobbying for culturally appropriate services”.

National Black Members' Caucus

17. BSL ACT – NEXT STEPS IN PROTECTING AND PRESERVING OUR LANGUAGE

Conference notes that the British Sign Language (BSL) Bill, a Private Member’s Bill introduced by Labour’s Rosie Cooper MP in 2021, was passed by both the House of Commons and the Lords earlier this year before passing into law following Royal Assent.

The BSL Act will recognise BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland in its own right. It is also supported by a duty on the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to regularly report on what each relevant government department has done to promote or facilitate the use of British Sign Language in its communications with the public.

The Act further places a requirement on the Secretary of State to issue guidance to government departments and other public bodies on the promotion and facilitation of BSL. The guidance will be developed together with Deaf BSL users.

However, conference notes that there is still a long way to go to ensure BSL is preserved for future generations as a rich and meaningful first language for many Deaf people. We also need to be sure that the BSL Act is more than just a piece of paper and that it will have a real impact on ensuring Deaf people are fully included in society. For example, never again should a UK prime minister speak to the nation in a time of crisis without a live BSL interpreter as happened time and again during the Covid pandemic.

Conference believes that the BSL Act must come with a clear action plan on the steps government and public bodies will take to ensure Deaf people are able to participate fully in society and that our language is protected and preserved.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Join appropriate campaigns to hold the DWP to account for its new responsibilities under the BSL Act

2. Raise awareness of the new Act with UNISON members and develop guidance on how it might be used in practice to achieve equality for our Deaf members in accessing government and public services
3. Circulate UNISON's Stewards' Guide to representing Deaf members to regions and branches

National Deaf Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

18. INDOOR AIR QUALITY IS AN ACCESS ISSUE

The Covid pandemic has brought to the fore the issue of indoor air quality, particularly the need for ventilation and filtration systems in schools. Our demands have still not been fully implemented by this government, to keep children and teachers safe and reduce community transmission.

Indoor air quality is also an access issue: It is perfectly possible to make all workplaces and public buildings much safer and reduce the transmission of airborne respiratory infections. This by no means needs new technology.

Those of us with respiratory conditions such as Asthma and COPD as well as those immunosuppressed, are all too well aware of how respiratory infections are likely to have more serious and longer effects from air borne infections such as flu and colds.

Covid highlighted this increased risk not only to those with lung conditions, but many other conditions included on the governments "clinically vulnerable" and "clinically extremely vulnerable" lists. The latter group were initially told to "shield" and the former to take extra care in reducing contacts with others. Many UNISON disabled members are in one of these groups.

The failure to significantly improve existing legislation and regulate workplaces and public building, specifically over ventilation and filtration systems has meant longer lock downs and school closures etc then might otherwise have been needed. People in the "Clinically Extremely Vulnerable" group had to shield for longer and remain at higher risk should they contract Covid. Many more people became infected at work in the early days of the pandemic. Tragically that meant unnecessary deaths and many others still suffering – and in some cases still unable to work – as a result of Long Covid

Disabled people should have confidence when attending work, education public services or engaging in leisure that the environment has been made as safe as possible. UNISON endorses the social model of disability, i.e., that it is society puts up barriers to our access rather than our impairments per se. Society and successive governments have through underinvestment, lack of adequate legislation and regulation of indoor air quality, put disabled members at greater risk, and this risk increased significantly once Covid 19 was circulating.

Disabled members conference recognises the need for workplaces, schools, education, amenities, public services and hospitality, to have adequate ventilation,

filtration systems and monitoring of air quality such and CO2 monitors, and to consider other ways of reducing risk with ultraviolet lights and adequate cleaning regimes.

Disabled members conference notes

- i. that Independent SAGE is developing a “scores on the doors” approach which would identify levels of risk and how risk has been mitigated and reduced on individual premises.
- ii. That it remains important to use other mitigation to avoid covid infection, including mask wearing when appropriate, testing and supported self-isolation so that those who do get covid or any air borne virus can stay at home with full pay and avoid transmission especially to those at higher risk.
- iii. That with more community spread of Covid not only is there a greater risk of infection but also the increased risk of more people suffering from Long Covid.
- iv. That disabled members conference 2021 agreed to campaign “for the government and employers to recognise that people with long Covid can be defined as disabled under the Equality Act if the condition has a substantial impact on their ability to do normal day to day activities that is expected to last twelve months or more”
- v. That Independent sage has published a pledge that states the following:

We pledge to protect our staff, users and customers from Covid-19.

- 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.

Disabled Members conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Campaign for Improved health and safety legislation to ensure all workplaces, public buildings, and area where services are provided including hospitality and retail, have adequate ventilation and/or filtrations systems and air quality monitoring, with adequate regulation to ensure good practice.
2. Use its influence to ensure that UNISON’s own health and safety training and advice will cover the issue of air quality and specifically the effects it may have on disabled members.
3. Call on the NEC to ensure that all UNISON meeting and events are fully risk assessed to ensure that venues have adequate air quality and monitored throughout. if safety perimeters are exceeded, they need to take action and make that information available to attendees. To continue to use online meetings and hybrid meeting to increase access at such meeting of those who are at higher risk.
4. Continue to campaign for Long Covid to be recognised as disability under the Equality Act.

5. Work with Independent Sage, Hazards Campaign, and others to demand employers sign the "Covid-19 Safety Pledge" and encourage UNISON branches to raise with employers as well and encouraging UNISON to raise where possible at national bargaining groups.
6. Again, work with groups such as Independent Sage to support plan to have "score on the doors" approach so disabled people can feel confident when entering buildings.

Islington UNISON Branch

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT WITH QUALIFICATIONS

19. BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Conference is concerned that the findings of a Parliamentary Work and Pension's Committee which completed in July 2021 are being disregarded by the Tory government.

The committee were clear that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) national programme for supporting disabled people is not working and that local level support is needed to break down the unacceptable barriers that disabled people face in the labour market.

The inquiry found Access to Work is bogged down by a bureaucratic, cumbersome, and time-consuming application process, Disability Confident needs re-evaluation if it is to be more than just a tick-box exercise and that employers who fail to make reasonable adjustments should be publicly named and shamed.

Other findings included a lack of support for disabled people during the pandemic, Work Capability Assessments that are not fit for purpose and that any narrowing of the disability employment gap is a result of changes in the labour market rather than progress in breaking down barriers.

Official statistics from the DWP note the disability employment rate was 52.7% in Q2 2021, compared to 81.0% for non-disabled people. It also noted that disabled workers move out of work at nearly twice the rate (8.8%) of non-disabled workers (4.9%). That workless disabled people move into work at nearly one-third of the rate (11.0%) of workless non-disabled people (26.9%). That the disability employment gap is wider for: disabled men; older (aged 50 to 64) disabled people; disabled people with no qualifications; disabled people of White ethnicity; disabled people living in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, North West, and North East.

Giving evidence to the committee, Conservative peer Lord Shinkwin said he was "mortified by the way that the DWP treated disabled people with such palpable disrespect" before warning that there is "a culture of doing things for disabled people rather than with them."

None of these findings are a surprise to disabled members and neither was the government's response, published in November 2021, which rejected all of the inquiry's conclusions and recommendations.

Instead of making changes they made statements about how they're trying to get more disabled people into work and assessing the programme before making any decisions.

Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee, Labour's Stephen Timms MP, hit the nail on the head in his reply to the government when he said: "The Government's unambitious response to our report fails to instil any confidence that it is serious about breaking down these barriers any time soon."

Conference believes that the time for assessing effectiveness is long gone. We have known for over a decade that the support to help people secure and retain work is not fit for purpose.

We don't need more assessments, inquiries and reports to break down the barriers - we need action. Action that not only gives disabled people the support they need but that gives them the tools they need to enforce their rights in the workplace.

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

1. Lobby for the recommendations of the Work and Pensions Committee report to be implemented including:
 - a) Reforming Access to Work by simplifying the application process, removing the support cap, re-instating local assessment hubs, introducing 'in principle' awards for jobseekers and allowing awards to be transferred between employers
 - b) Requiring employers with more than 250 employees to publish data on the proportion of employees who are disabled at each level of their organisation
 - c) Funding local authorities to set up their own versions of the Work and Health Programme
 - d) Publishing details of employers who fail to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees
2. Campaign for the Equality and Human Rights Commission to reinstate the Disability Commissioner position and the Disability Advisory Committee

National Disabled Members Committee
National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

19.1

Insert new sixth paragraph as follows:

"UNISON is concerned that Black disabled workers face particular barriers in accessing employment, including qualifications not being accepted."

National Black Members' Caucus

Developing an Efficient and Effective Union

20. DEVELOPMENT OF HYBRID DISABLED MEMBERS CONFERENCE

This Conference notes that:

Since the pandemic started meetings moved online and have been taking place via ZOOM or TEAMS, benefiting disabled members as they could work from home but still participate in meetings.

When UNISON's Disabled Members Conference moved online in 2021 many more delegates were able to attend.

Disabled members could attend when previously due to the nature of their disability they were unable to travel.

It is not easy to travel to places like Brighton when there is no direct service unless you drive.

Not everyone can use the train and coaches are similarly difficult for some disabled members.

With the return to the office hybrid meetings have enabled disabled members to participate in meetings especially if they still feel nervous about going into the workplace

A hybrid Disabled Members Conference would enable greater participation of disabled members.

This Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. work with UNISON Conference Department to develop a means by which future Disabled Members Conferences can be hybrid to improve the accessibility of the Conference for disabled members who cannot travel.

Birmingham UNISON Branch

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT WITH QUALIFICATIONS

20.1

Delete the sentence beginning "When UNISON's disabled members conference" and the sentence beginning "Disabled members could attend" and replace with:

"UNISON's Disabled Members Conference was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19 and was replaced with a week of webinars called Disability Live! Although this was not a policy making conference and no votes were taken, many disabled members who might not have been able to attend an in-person event, due to the nature of their disability and being unable to travel, were able to attend online.

UNISON's 2021 conference took place in person and there was no online or hybrid option due in part to the difficulty of conducting votes in a hybrid manner, both in the hall and online."

After the paragraph which starts "A hybrid disabled members conference" insert new paragraphs as follows:

"However, conference is concerned that some branches might see a hybrid conference as a way to cut branch costs and might insist that disabled members attend online rather than in person. Conference is further concerned that there might be pressure to go fully online for our conference, with no in-person option, if UNISON is seeking to reduce spending.

Conference believes that disabled members conference should continue to take place in person as the default, with hybrid as an additional option that members can choose if this is more suitable for them and their access needs, and not because this suits the branch."

National Disabled Members Committee

21. HYBRID MEETINGS

Conference, as individual members of our union that self-identified as disabled members, we are all fully aware that within the overall membership of the union there are still individuals who need to shield. This is because of the risk posed to them by COVID-19 since the government removed the social-distancing guidelines issued earlier in the pandemic.

With this in mind, Conference is anxious that as the union starts to move back to face-to-face meetings, we ensure that members who are vulnerable to COVID are not marginalised. Members with long-term medical conditions which prevent them attending meetings in-person due the potential risk of them contracting the virus must be able to participate fully at every level of the union.

We consider the use of hybrid technology for meetings to be a reasonable adjustment which the union must implement in order to remove barriers to participation.

With this in mind, Conference:

Calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National Executive Committee to produce guidance for Regions and Branches on conducting hybrid meetings

Taking this step would ensure that our union continues to be inclusive and encourages all its members to take a fully active part within its democratic structures.

Hampshire Branch

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT WITH QUALIFICATIONS

22. SELF-ORGANISATION: NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US, IS FOR US

Conference applauds UNISON's National Delegate Conference [NDC], which recently unequivocally re-asserted the union's commitment to Fair Representation.

Rule D5.2 of the UNISON Rulebook observes that self-organisation assists the union:

- a) Promote the union's equalities and bargaining agenda
- b) Defend jobs, terms and conditions and services
- c) Build its density and have a strong and dynamic presence in the workplace.

Conference re-affirms we are a union that prides itself on pioneering an equalities agenda, the principles of proportionality and fair representation, and creating a self-organised structure.

However, developing arrangements in some areas may undermine the union's self-organised approach to Equalities. This includes for example:

The Branch Support and Organising Fund Guidance that fails to give disabled members a voice in regional funding decision-making processes, which undermines the principle of fair representation.

The disparity across regions in relation to funding allocation and the initial funding proposal that prevented disabled members Self-Organised Groups access funding autonomously.

Proposals in some regions to create Equality Liaison Groups in such a manner that may undermine the present self-organised structure, dilute the distinctiveness of self-organised groups, and pull self-organisation under a generic equalities umbrella.

Conference is aware that combined these reflect the undermining of UNISON's approach to self-organisation, whether intentional or not.

Conference observes that the union's present approach to self-organisation has served us well, aligning to an equalities agenda but led by self-identity that recognises the distinctiveness of each strand in terms of the issues, concerns and interests affecting that membership while supportive of the principle of intersectionality in common areas of interest or concern. Conference views any step to change this as regressive.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Re-affirm its support to self-organisation through the current existing constituted structures.
2. Feedback from each regional self-organised disabled members' committee on current practice within their respective areas in relation to their funding, organising, and governance structure and to produce a report prior to UNISON's next NDC in June 2023, for circulation to each regional self-organised disabled members' committee.

3. Discuss the issue with UNISON's other self-organised national committees and produce a summary report prior to UNISON's next NDC in June 2023, for circulation to the NDMC in order that it may consider the findings and that its regional representatives may report back to their regions.

Scotland Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: SUPPORT

23. TRANS ALLY TRAINING

Conference welcomes progress made by UNISON over many years in campaigning and negotiating for equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender plus (LGBT+) people both in work and in society.

Despite these advances, many transgender people still experience serious abuse and discrimination on a daily basis, including in their workplaces.

A disproportionate number of trans people identify as disabled, often due to mental health problems caused, or exacerbated by discrimination.

Trans people who are disabled face a double disadvantage where they can be refused reasonable adjustments and be turned down for jobs on the basis of being trans and disabled. The pay gap is also worse for trans women who are disabled.

It is important that we all call out anti trans discrimination in the workplace and in everyday life, just as we would expect non-disabled people to support us in our fight against disability discrimination.

We therefore welcome the new Trans Ally training developed by UNISON's National LGBT+ Committee which is being rolled out nationally and regionally. As disabled people we understand how it feels to be overlooked and discriminated against.

It is of course important that all UNISON training is accessible, and this training should be fully accessible by design, with reasonable adjustments provided where required. The trans ally training has so far been delivered virtually but adjustments should be available across all UNISON training, whether online, hybrid, or in person.

Conference also welcomes the new facility which allows delegates to UNISON conferences to have their preferred pronouns added to their delegate credentials badge. This is an inclusive step that should be encouraged to allow people to be themselves, knowing that other people will respect their identity.

Conference believes that trans rights are human rights and we must all be allies of our trans disabled members, whether in our union or in the workplace. We therefore call on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. Publicise the new trans ally training to regions, urging them to request that it is run in their region.

2. Seek to run a trans ally training session for all members of the National Disabled Members Committee.
3. Encourage disabled members to use the pronoun facility for conference name badges and circulate UNISON's 'Why pronouns Matter' fact sheet to regions.
4. Continue our work to ensure that our self-organised group is inclusive of both trans and non-binary disabled people's identities, in our language, policies and practices.

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

23.1

At the end of the fourth paragraph insert: "Black trans people face particular disadvantage, especially when seeking a job."

National Black Members' Caucus

Amendments ruled out of order

Beyond the remit of conference

Motion 3: Mental Health Awareness Training

After "...delivering joint training" Add:

"5. To produce guidance and resources for branches to establish support networks for activists, who are exposed to difficult situations and members in distress, in order to promote their personal wellbeing and mental health."

Hampshire

Insufficiently clear and introduces substantial new subject matter

Motion 4 Covid-19 and post-traumatic stress disorder among disabled workers

4.1

Paragraph

The trauma of PTSD requires longer term psychiatric and psychological treatment. However, to reduced costs in their Occupational Health Services, many employers have made it more difficult to access face-to-face counselling services and the service level agreement they hold with OH services is likely to fall far below the long-term support required for PTSD.

Change to

The trauma of PTSD requires more complex psychiatric and psychological treatment in order to achieve a diagnosis and long-term support. Employers Occupational

Health Services should offer initial counselling and ensure appropriate referrals are made to Mental Health Services. Many employers have made it more difficult to access this initial counselling.

And amend the following action points

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members' Committee:

1. To commend employers who actively support emotional resilience in the workplace, including healthy lifestyles
2. To call on employers to provide routine psychological debriefing for disabled employees who fall into the higher risk groups, identified above, who experience PTSD symptoms as a result of covid-related experiences.
3. To encourage employers to provide face-to-face counselling services as their default position for disabled employees within the higher risk groups, identified above, who experience PTSD symptoms as a result of covid-related experiences.

To

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members' Committee:

1. To commend employers who actively support emotional resilience in the workplace, including healthy lifestyles
2. To call on employers to provide routine initial psychological debriefing for disabled employees who fall into the higher risk groups, identified above, who experience PTSD symptoms as a result of covid-related experiences.
3. To encourage employers to provide initial face-to-face counselling services as their first appointment. This should be followed by Occupational Health making referrals to Mental Health Services to secure diagnosis and ongoing support. This should apply to all employees within the higher risk groups, identified above, who experience PTSD symptoms as a result of covid-related experiences.

North West Region

Motion 6: Effects of long covid

National Disabled Members Committee

As the amendment goes into some detail on an on-going legal matter it is not possible to print the wording of the amendment