

Disabled Members Annual Report 2022

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1. Chairs' Introduction

2022 saw us coming out of pandemic restrictions, allowing the National Disabled Members Committee to meet face to face again. There has been much to celebrate for our disabled members as 2022 is the Year of Disabled Workers, having been postponed from 2021.

There is still much to fight for as human rights are under attack in this country and there may be consequences for equality legislation. Trade unions continue to be attacked and demonised by this government. With 1.3m members of which an estimated 200,000 are disabled members we have a national voice both within our union and in negotiations with employers, which strengthens our hand in representing disabled members in the workplace.

We have had several webinars for Year of Disabled workers with more to come, so keep an eye on emails and the UNISON website. We held an event in the UK parliament to lobby MPs to support the Disability Employment Charter which is a cross-organisation charter asking for improved rights for disabled people in the workplace. This was followed up by a successful fringe meeting at National Delegate Conference.

However, there are still significant challenges for the union and for our disabled members. The Tories' austerity agenda has been followed by a slow recovery by Covid which has now been halted by the cost of living crisis and government inaction. Public services continue to suffer and we know that post-Covid redundancies have disproportionately impacted disabled members. At the same time, public services disabled people often rely on to live independent lives have been decimated from over a decade of Tory-led government. On top of this, we now face energy prices we cannot afford and face bleak prospects this winter.

The cost of living crisis disproportionately affects disabled members and your chairs and committee have been active on this - highlighting the issues both inside and outside the union.

Despite the challenges, UNISON's National Disabled Members Committee has remained positive, steadfast and active. We have campaigned on the issues that matter to our members, including welfare reform and have produced guidance on issues that affect our members. The benefits system continues to treat disabled claimants unfairly and we continue to challenge this, along with pushing for reform of Access to Work.

Hybrid and homeworking has become an important issue for our disabled members and we continue to highlight that this should be a reasonable adjustment where it is the members' choice, although it is not appropriate for all our members.

We have worked with other self-organised group on work relating to LGBT+, Women and Black and young members both in and out of the regular equality liaison committee meeting we have with the NEC and the other Self Organised Groups. The National Committee has a diverse membership and we have representatives on other self organised groups and they send representatives to us.

Our delegates to National Delegate Conference participated strongly in the debate on our motions and we would also like to thank all of our members who represented us as delegates to the various UNISON conferences during the year.

Your chairs group has worked hard to represent you and to be a strong voice of disabled members both within the union and externally, leading the work of the committee between meetings.

Upcoming sections of this report will report in more detail on the work the committee has been doing on motions from last year's conference and other key areas of focus this year.

We look forward to seeing you all in Brighton in October where we can continue to celebrate the year of disabled workers!

Elizabeth Cameron and Graeme Ellis (Co-Chairs)
Nicola Moran and Tony Slaven (Deputy Co-Chair)

Year of Disabled Workers

Year of Disabled Workers 2022

With two thirds of Covid deaths being among disabled people and the pandemic shining a light on ingrained inequalities, the time was right for UNISON to declare 2022 the Year of Disabled Workers. The aims of the year were to highlight the experience of our disabled members, the value they bring to our union and to the workplace, and to call for better enforcement of legal rights including the right to reasonable adjustments at work. We were grateful to the Campaign Fund for supporting two key note events, including a launch reception at NDC and a campaign event in parliament.



For our 200,000 disabled members in UNISON, disability equality is something they do every year, not just in 2022. But for the Year of Disabled Workers we needed the rest of the union to get involved. We started the year with a webinar for regions on Making an Impact in the Year of Disabled Workers, encouraging them to agree their own plan of action.

We agreed a national action plan at the start of the year and our General

Secretary Christina McAnea kicked things off by writing to all regions and service groups explaining their role in making the year a success and encouraging them to commit to action on the organising, bargaining and campaigning challenges.

The organising challenge

We asked all branches to elect a branch disabled members officer or contact and to send them on our online branch disability reps training. We worked with LAOS to deliver this training on a regular basis and we ran a rolling waiting list throughout the year. The training covered why trade unions organise around equality issues, legal protections for disabled workers and how to negotiate with the employers for better rights for our disabled members.

To support this work we updated our guide to Becoming a Branch Disabled Members Officer and publicised this through our regular eBulletin.



It was heartening to see so many new activists come forward, with the backing of their branch and we expect to have trained at least 100 reps this year. However there are still many branches who don't yet have a disabled members officer or their rep hasn't had the training so we are continuing to urge regions and branches to prioritise this work.

The bargaining challenge

We focussed on two key bargaining areas where we believed branches and service groups could help make a concrete difference for our disabled members. We asked all branches to try to negotiate a disability leave agreement and a reasonable adjustment policy and 'passport' system. Disability leave is still something most employers don't offer but it can have

a huge impact on our disabled members' need to take time off sick and potentially end up on a capability and losing their job. A reasonable adjustment passport allows disabled workers to keep their adjustments when moving teams or when they get a new manager and can save all the time, energy and high paid HR salaries that are often wasted arguing about the same adjustments over and over again.

Many branches took up the challenge and opened negotiations with their employers on these policies and we are hoping that this work will continue beyond 2022 as part of the legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers.



Shadow Minister for Disabled People Vicky Foxcroft MP (centre), Ellie Reeves MP and Jonathan Ashworth MP back the Disability Employment Charter at UNISON's parliamentary event

The campaigning challenge

The final ask of branches and service groups was to help us gain changes to disability equality legislation and policies using our main campaigning tool, the Disability Employment Charter, of which we are a founder member. We gave presentations to various service groups and regions on the subject and encouraged reps to approach their employer to sign up to the charter. The charter now has over 120 organisations signed up to it and we are keen to continue this work.

Supporting under-represented members

We continued to organise under-represented members through our women's, LGBT+, Black and Deaf (BSL) networks. June network meetings took place online but we were delighted that we were able to hold some network meetings in person in August.

Equipping our activists

We input into the newly updated UNISON Guide to Facility Time where we ensured a new section on equalities was added with recommendations on fair allocation of facility time to activists with protected characteristics, reasonable adjustments for disabled stewards and access to becoming a steward for groups such as Deaf (BSL) members.

We continued to operate a pilot Activists' Reasonable Adjustment passport system for national self organised group committees. Work to extend this to conferences, the NEC and service group executive committees is ongoing with an online solution in development.



Working with our service groups

We launched a new campaign called 'Disable Inequality' this year, with the aim of challenging racism in the NHS. This campaign is based on the data from the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) for England, which is a set of ten measures of disability equality that covers all trusts in England. We established a campaign page on our website and produced updated guidance and resources for branches to use. We ran an interactive event at Health conference, highlighting ways to use the data in Health branches. We have now developed a new training session on the WDES which we will be piloting in October.

In addition to working with the Local Government service group on encouraging local authorities to sign up to the Disability Employment Charter, we also worked with WET, Energy and Community on disability leave and passports with a series of presentations and webinars.

Labour Link liaison

We continue to have an active involvement with the Labour Link and the Labour Party. We responded to consultations on the priorities for Labour Party equality work and to various National Policy Forum consultations which are setting the scene for the next labour Party manifesto.

Recruitment

The Year of Disabled Workers was of course a great recruitment opportunity and many of our regions and branches ran stalls and events highlighting the benefits of being in UNISON. We produced Year of Disabled Workers merchandise that could be ordered by branches and we updated many of our materials and resources.

Cost of living crisis

We fed into UNISON's campaign on the cost of living crisis, raising issues for disabled members who need to power up electrical equipment or are more vulnerable to cold. With many of our members facing a difficult winter ahead, we will continue our work on maximising members' income through our work on welfare benefits, sick pay and the disability pay gap.

2. National Disabled Members Committee Work Programme

The motions agreed at UNISON's National Disabled Members Conference 2021 form the basis of the NDMC's annual work programme. The NDMC met in January 2022 and agreed the final work programme. Two sub groups were established, the Representing and Organising members sub group and the Disability Campaigns and Policy sub group. They met regularly to take this work forward this work as follows:

Representing and Organising Disabled Workers

Motions 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 21, 24, 25, EM2 and motions 22 and 23 (not reached)

Protecting our members after the Covid pandemic

We have continued to produce updated advice and guidance for our disabled members who are particularly vulnerable to Covid, including an updated guide to members who were previously shielding.

We launched our survey of disabled members in post-Covid workplaces in September and we hope to present the results to conference. We focussed on looking at issues such as hybrid and home working, access to reasonable adjustments and Access to Work, and what members felt our priorities should be. We will be comparing the results with the findings of our important 2019 report 'Let's be Reasonable: Disability equality in the workplace'.

New ways of working

We contributed to UNISON's updated guidance on Negotiating Home and Hybrid working, which emphasises in particular disabled workers' right to reasonable adjustments both when working from home and the workplace. We publicised the guidance in our regular eBulletins.

We developed a new Best Practice Guide to Hybrid Meetings that can be used by branches and by employers. We have made clear that hybrid meetings need to be fully accessible for all participants, including Deaf members who use BSL interpreters or lip reading.

Access to Work

The sub group worked to develop a new expanded guide to Access to Work which can be used by stewards and by members to receive financial

support to gain and retain employment. This was launched at our Access to Work webinar in September which took place as part of the Year of Disabled Workers. This was a well attended and information-packed session which is now available to run in regions through UNISON's Learning and Organising Services.

UNISON continued to be represented on the Access to Work Stakeholders Forum for England which met regularly to look at changes to the service including plans for a new online claims portal and the pilot of Access to Work Plus. UNISON has fed in the experiences of our members and in particular the need to allow electronic applications and claims to address some of the concerns from members during the Covid pandemic, and the need to remove the cap on claims which particularly impacts Deaf members.

As part of our work on the Disability Employment Charter, we have been calling for a further review of Access to Work to ensure application and renewal processes are efficient, personalised, and flexible.



Making an Impact in the Year of Disabled Workers webinar

Mental health

Our mental health bargaining guide was updated and re-issued during the Covid-19 crisis and this year we have developed a new model mental health policy which can be used by branches to encourage their employer to take concrete steps to support good mental health in the workplace.

We worked with UNISON's Learning and Organising Services to update course materials for Disability Awareness training for members, provided by Open University. Work in this area is still ongoing as we seek to ensure the social model of disability runs through all UNISON training.

Make disabled employees a priority

We used the Year of Disabled Workers to highlight our suite of bargaining resources which include:

- Disability Leave Bargaining Guide
- Reasonable Adjustments Bargaining Guide, model policy and passport
- Mental health Bargaining Guide
- Sickness Absence Bargaining Guide

We also publicised our two Stewards Guides to representing disabled members and Deaf (BSL) members. In addition we updated our set of Quick Guides which cover a variety of issues relating to workplace disability equality.

UNISON's learning and organising services again ran the popular advanced employment law course on disability discrimination and we continued to publicise our Quick Guide to the Social Model of Disability in order to promote disability inclusive communication and language.

The sub-group considered developing an award as suggested in the motion and decided this would be best awarded to an individual member and to a branch or region. The inaugural award has now been created and will be launched at conference and awarded during Disability History Month in November or December.



South East Equality Conference focuses on Year of Disabled Workers

The motion called for training on being a disability ally and the committee considered and evaluated the current Trans Ally training pilot. A disability version of this is now in development.

Race discrimination protocol

The sub-group sought and considered information from UNISON's legal team on the level of disability discrimination cases being taken forward on behalf of members and found that this is the largest category of discrimination cases dealt with by Thompsons. It was agreed to defer any further consideration of whether a disability discrimination protocol was required in the light of the findings of the current review of the race discrimination protocol.

Disabled women fulfilling their potential

The sub-group developed a new disabled members Organising Guide to getting involved in the union and understanding our democratic processes that can be used to help disabled women members participate in branches, regions and at a national level.

Women members of our self organised group have worked with UNISON's new increasing participation project which is looking at ways of expanding women's involvement in our union at all levels. We developed a presentation on Standing for UNISON Elections which was piloted at our policy weekend in January.

The women's caucus has organised a women's public speaking drop-in session at the start of this year's conference in order to provide peer support and confidence building to potential women speakers.

The sub-group will continue to monitor the accessibility of hybrid meeting infrastructure so that this option can be promoted further to allow better inclusion of women members with caring responsibilities.

Disclosure of disabilities at work

The sub group has developed a new 'Know your Rights' leaflet which is aimed at encouraging members to identify as disabled, breaking down stigma and making clear that being a disabled person gives members important protections under the Equality Act 2010. The leaflet can be used in branches, on recruitment stalls and at equality events.

Our Stewards Guide to Representing Disabled workers includes advice for reps on how to support members to disclose to their employer that they are disabled and we have used the Year of Disabled Worker to publicise this guide further with branches and regions.

Disability related absence

Working on sickness absence issues has been a significant area of work for us post-pandemic as the Covid crisis highlighted the inadequate level of statutory sick pay in the UK and the need to negotiate strong sickness absence policies in unionised workplaces. Negotiating separate Disability Leave policies has been one of the key asks of branches and service groups during the year of Disabled Workers and our Bargaining Guide to Negotiating Disability leave policies has proved an invaluable resource which we have continued to publicise.

We held a successful and well attended webinar on Disability Leave as part of the Year of Disabled Workers where we heard directly from reps who have negotiated locally with their employers. Where branches have agreed disability leave policies we have encouraged them to add these to the database held by our Bargaining Support Unit so that they can be used by other branches opening up employer negotiations.



Northern region spreading the word about the Year of Disabled Workers, with support from Labour's Chi Onwurah MP

NEC Resolutions: Not in our name

It was agreed that work on this motion would be taken forward by the committee as a whole. As agreed by Disabled Members Conference, a motion on the issue was submitted to National Delegate Conference. Members worked with regions, branches, service groups and other self organised groups to seek support as instructed in the motion and the issue was also raised at the Equality Liaison Committee. The motion was passed at the conference in June.

With the NEC failing to meet to discuss the issues raised in the motion, the committee agreed in August to task the chairs group to write to the presidential team asking for an update on the actions agreed in the motion. At time of going to print a response had not yet been received.

Disability Policy and Campaigns

Motions 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and EM1

Covid 19 and disability inclusion in the workplace

We have continued to campaign for home working as a reasonable adjustment after the experience of many of our disabled members during the pandemic. UNISON fed into Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) guidance on flexible working, emphasising the importance of home and hybrid working as a reasonable adjustment. In December we contributed to UNISON's response to the government's consultation on flexible working where we were clear that homeworking and hybrid working needs to be a choice but that all jobs should be open to flexible working by default. We are yet to hear what the government intends to do on this issue.



Year of Disabled Workers merchandise in BSL produced by Scottish disabled members

The pandemic highlighted the inadequate rate and extent of statutory sick pay (SSP) in the UK and the disproportionate impact this has on disabled workers. We worked with UNISON's Policy team, the TUC and with the Centre for Progressive Change to campaign for a higher SSP rate that applies to all workers, including low paid workers. We signed a letter to government on this issue in August and the Disability Employment Charter, of which we are a founding member, includes a call for SSP to be raised to at least the European average.

When 'monkey pox' began to hit the headlines later in the year, we used our experience from the Covid pandemic to work with other parts of the union to quickly produce a new guide to supporting members with monkey pox, focusing on the importance of good sick pay policies and risk assessments and highlighting Equality Act protections against discrimination.



General Secretary Christina McAnea and Labour Shadow Secretary of State for Education Wes Streeting show support for the Disability Employment Charter at UNISON's parliamentary event

PIP and welfare benefits campaigning

We responded to the government's *Shaping Future Benefits* green paper consultation in December. This was a comprehensive consultation which covered PIP, Universal Credit, Access to Work and work capability assessments. UNISON called for a new approach to PIP based on a holistic approach to disabled people's needs that takes into account fluctuating impairments, does not punish disabled people who work, and is delivered by the public sector. We also called for more accessible ways of accessing PIP and other benefits.

The committee wrote to the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions calling for ethnicity monitoring of PIP claim outcomes so that we can ensure Black applicants are not facing disproportionate rejection of their claims. We have also been keeping the new Scottish replacement for PIP, Adult Disability Payment (ADP), under review for any learning that could be used in other areas of the UK.

The sub group produced a new Quick Guide to Personal Independence

Payments that can be used on recruitment stalls and by local reps. This was a timely intervention given the current cost of living crisis and should help members maximise their income.

Long Covid

Long Covid was a key area of work over the year as more of our members experienced problems returning to work after Covid, with phased returns often breaking down and some employers being reluctant to accept the member could be disabled and entitled to reasonable adjustments. We have been clear that the Equality Act 2010 already protects many of our members with Long Covid due to the definition of a disabled person included in the Act.

We were very disappointed when the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) tweeted incorrect information on this issue, although they later partially backtracked with a statement which was still incorrect. Our General Secretary Christina McAnea wrote to the EHRC demanding they take down the tweet and that they correct their subsequent statement.

However we welcomed an Employment Tribunal decision in the summer which accepted that a worker with Long Covid was disabled and we used this to continue to push government and employers to accept that many workers with Long Covid will be disabled by their condition and are entitled to reasonable adjustments and protection against discrimination.

We worked closely with our Bargaining Support unit to update our Guide to Supporting Members with Long Covid and we held a webinar on the subject as part of the Year of Disabled Workers. We also gave presentations on how to support members with Long Covid to various groups of UNISON activists including Health and Safety reps, WET and Energy service group stewards and activists in the ambulance service.

Government disability strategy

We lobbied government in advance of the publication of the new national Disability Strategy but we were hugely disappointed by what they came up with. The strategy was a mix of warm words, already announced initiatives and very little new funding. To cap it all, in January the High Court found the strategy was based on an illegal consultation and the whole strategy was therefore illegal.

As an alternative to the government's discredited strategy, we worked with a coalition of eight organisations, including Shaw Trust, Disability Rights

UK, Warwick University and others (with UNISON the only trade union founder member) to develop the ground-breaking Disability Employment Charter which we helped launch at the end of 2021.

Over 120 organisations have now signed up to the charter, which includes nine “asks” of government. UNISON is particularly proud to have ensured the asks include a two week deadline for responses to reasonable adjustment request, a right to disability leave, mandatory disability pay gap monitoring and a right to time off for equality reps.



Labour Deputy Leader Angela Rayner MP, with UNISON member Marie Tidball, backs the Disability Employment Charter at our parliamentary event

We have used the charter as the basis of our campaigning work this year, including meeting with the Minister for Disabled People, Chloe Smith. We held an event in parliament in June which was attended by at least 50 MPs. Our general Secretary Christina McAnea and Labour’s shadow minister for disabled people Vicky Foxcroft spoke at the event. Labour MPs in particular were keen to work with UNISON on the charter and we intend to continue this engagement as we move towards the election of the next Labour government.

Reasonable Adjustment guidance

We were asked to sit on a Task and Finish Group set up by government, and led by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to look at strengthening guidance on reasonable adjustments. We attended a number of meetings with other stakeholders (we were the only trade union involved) to consider

and agree new guidance and we particularly focused on the need to use the social model of disability. We were able to ensure the new guidance included a recommendation that employers should respond to reasonable adjustment requests within two weeks and that disability leave should be considered as a reasonable adjustment. The online guidance and an accompanying toolkit is now being launched nationwide.

Disability Monitoring and pay gaps

In April we responded to a consultation from government on whether and how to implement workplace disability monitoring. We called for workplace disability reporting to be mandatory for all employers with over 250 staff at a minimum, with a later extension to organisations with over 100 staff. However, simply understanding the percentage of workers in an organisation is not sufficient so in addition we argued that mandatory disability pay gap reporting should also be introduced to tackle low pay. Again, we are still waiting for the government to decide if it will take any action in the light of this consultation and we will continue to push them on this front.



Delegates supporting our disability pay gap campaign at NDC

We developed a new guide to the disability pay gap and how branches can take concrete steps to achieve change locally. One of the asks in the Disability Equality Charter, of which we are a founding member, is for mandatory disability pay gap reporting. We worked with the other self organised groups to run an interactive

session on pay gaps at National Delegate Conference and we helped develop a new briefing on all equality pay gaps and how branches can work to address these.

Review of Equality Act

We have continued to campaign for full implementation of all parts of the Equality Act and for the re-introduction of protections removed by the coalition government's review in 2013. In particular we have worked with the National Women's Committee to press government to bring forward protections against third party harassment. Although we received a commitment on this, as yet no action has been taken by government and we will need to continue to push this with the new government.



We submitted a motion on the need for a review of the Equality Act to NDC and this was passed so it is now UNISON policy and will form part of the NEC's workplan. We also responded to Labour Party manifesto consultations calling for a review as part of the next Labour manifesto. In recent months the government have pushed forward with plans to replace the Human Rights Act with a new Bill of Rights which is likely to result in a reduction to our rights. We have been working with Equally Ours and other equality groups to campaign against this.

Campaign for Deaf inclusion

UNISON has long campaigned for a BSL Act, to mirror legislation already in place in Scotland, so we were delighted that Labour's Rosie Cooper got cross-party support for her BSL Act which finally passed into law this year. We used our social media to back the Act and raise awareness. The Act

gives BSL full status as a language. However, there is still a long way to go to ensure Deaf people are fully included in our society and we have continued to campaign on this issue.

Equality for people with autism

We continued to raise awareness of potential reasonable adjustments for workers with autism through disseminating our Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments guide which has an section on autism. UNISON's learning and organising services are now offering regular autism awareness and neurodiversity awareness training.

Hate Crime

Campaigning to improve the law relating to Hate Crime against disabled and LGBT+ people has long been a priority for disabled members. We worked with the other self organised groups to respond to the Law Commission's review of Hate Crime legislation in England last year. In December the Law Commission published a final report where it has recommended, as called for by UNISON, that disability hate crime and LGBT+ hate crime are treated as aggravated offences in line with race hate crime. However, as in many other areas, government has still to act on these recommendations and UNISON will continue to campaign.

3. Conference Reports

National Delegate Conference 2022

We would like to thank the delegates of the National Disabled Members Conference for voting for us to represent you at this year's National Delegates Conference we felt proud and privileged to move our especially important motions and amendments. We were both staying at the Jury's Inn Waterfront, a genuinely nice hotel. A meeting had been arranged to meet with the national officer and members of the NEC and other NDMC in the reception area of the Jury's Inn to discuss our motions and amendments and other items to discuss which was relevant to ensure a smooth running and all going as planned.

The meeting was enjoyable, and everyone was looking forward to a busy NDC, although some delegates had already been in Conference.

On Day 1 the Brighton Conference Hall was busy with Delegates and Visitors. We were seated separately from the other SOG delegates, we presumed this was because of our reasonable adjustments which had been requested in advance.



Disabled members meeting at NDC

Susan's table and screen (large) for speech to text was perfect, and she felt incredibly pleased with her reasonable adjustments. However, Kathleen had some issues with her chair that in the end were partly solved by putting a blanket under the chair. With Susan's vision impairment and Kathleen's unsteadiness on her feet, we were concerned it would be a trip hazard, fortunately Susan had requested an end seat of a row so she exited each time from the left, but it might have been a different story. Disabled members must be treated at all times with respect and dignity, and fully supported reasonable adjustments, we are aware of logistics but a couple of

spare chairs would be something to think about. Having been a NDC rep before, Kathleen had automatically presumed we would be at the sides of the conference hall along with the other SOGs reps with tables and seats for each rep. She was really shocked even although she had fallen at Local Government Conference she had presumed things would be better not worse at NDC. Although maybe we shouldn't complain as it is the first time we met in three years but it could have been better. Also, for anyone with a personal assistant their chair needs to be also designated with a name as Kathleen's mum repeatedly had to ask a delegate to move as they had taken her seat and this was to ensure Kathleen had adequate space to move as her movements are exaggerated due to her disability.

Sat at the back of the hall with her screen it was no problem for Susan, although Kathleen was anxious about the distance to walk when going up to move a motion/amendment.



Celebrating the Year of Disabled Workers at our NDC fringe event

Susan's focus of Day 1 was moving Motion 10 – Not in Our Name. It was on the agenda for 2pm after the lunch break – it was being opposed by the NEC.

Susan's speech had been reviewed and changes made by other committee members to make it into a really passionate speech – Susan went out before lunch to practice. She timed the speech and it was a little over 5 minutes and had to be tweaked slightly.

The morning session included:

- Welcome to Conference
- First and Second Report of Standing Orders Committee
- Annual Report
- UNISON Accounts
- President's Speech

The afternoon session started at 2pm and our first Motion which was Motion 10 Not in our Name was the order of business

The national officer came to the front with Susan as this was a contentious motion which this the majority of the NEC was opposing and there were lots of speakers for and against – Susan moved the motion and then lots of other speakers were at the rostrum – those in opposition tried to stop the debate with putting the question but this failed and debate continued. Kathleen was wondering if Susan would ever return such was the amount of speakers on the motion. Finally Susan had the right to reply and then it was left to Conference to decide – Conference decided to go against the NEC and voted for Motion 10 NOT IN OUR NAME.

It was a team effort, and all Disabled Members should be proud. We did this together.

Kathleen moved the Equality Act motion which she honestly didn't think we were going to get to but it was the final motion to be heard. She was more nervous moving it as she was concerned it wouldn't be heard, but thankfully it was and passed.

We chaired two caucuses and attended the Year of the Disabled Workers event which was good and thankfully Kathleen's mum (her PA) was there as she wouldn't been able to carry a drink to my seat as the 'glasses' weren't suitable.

Despite everything we both felt honoured and privilege to represent you this year.

Susan Parkinson and Kathleen Kennedy

TUC Disabled Workers Conference 2022

TUC Disabled Workers conference took place online 22-23 March and it was a virtual conference. There were 12 members on the UNISON delegation and we kept in touch using a WhatsApp group which was very active throughout conference!

UNISON's motion on the disability employment charter had been composited with a motion from UCU. The TUC Disabled Workers Committee met prior to conference and decided to oppose the composite. It was clear to the UNISON delegation that they misunderstood that the charter was asking for. However this meant that our motion became quite controversial.



Iain Scott-Burdon speaking at TUC Disabled Workers Conference

Members of the delegation worked with other unions to lobby for support and we had strong backing from UCU, Unite and PCS.



Sian Stockham speaking at TUC Disabled Workers Conference

Angela Hamilton moved the motion and UCU seconded it. There were a number of speakers against and Angela responded to them in her right of reply. When it came to the vote there was very little time allowed, compared to other motions, and it was the last vote of the day so some people never got the chance to vote. The motion was a dead heat with 60 votes in each side. This meant that the motion was lost as a draw means the motion falls. The delegation was very disappointed and concerned

that there had been irregularities in the ballot. We agreed as a delegation to raise this with conference in the morning and we worked with other unions to plan our strategy on this.

The next day Graeme Ellis moved a motion to overturn the vote and to take it again. Despite attempts to stop this, the vote was taken again. This time we won convincingly. This was a hard fought victory for which the delegation was very proud.

To add to this triumph, conference then agreed that the UNISON composite should be the motion that was sent to Congress!

A number of other motions were passed and UNISON delegates were very conscientious about ensuring we all voted.

Sian Stockham was again elected to represent UNISON on the TUC.

Overall, this was quite an exciting conference due to the controversy over our motion and each and every member of the delegation did their bit to ensure we won the day in the end. Thank you to all of the delegates.

Labour Link Forum report

We really enjoyed representing Disabled Members at the Labour Link Forum. It was great to meet up with fellow Labour Link members.

We really enjoyed hearing from Labour's Deputy Labour Leader Angela Rayner and our former UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis.

A total of 18 motions were heard on topics such as social care and cost of living crisis, amongst others.

All of the motions went through with excellent debate. Graeme Ellis moved the motion submitted by the National Disabled Members Committee and also spoke on others which had particular impact on disabled members. Our voice was heard loud and clear.

Audrey Dinnall and Graeme Ellis

Labour Women's Conference

It was an honour to represent UNISON Disabled members at the Labour Party women's conference in March 2022.

Due to coronavirus, it was decided it would be held virtually, to ensure safety to all. It all ran very smoothly, and I was able to use the assisted technology platform.

I was a first time speaker at Labour Women's conference and spoke on the Composite motion on Social Care about the impact on women with disabilities.



Audrey speaking on behalf of UNISON at Labour Party Women's Conference

There were policy debates on women's healthcare, violence against women and girls, women and the economy, food poverty, rights following pregnancy loss, social care and women refugees. The motions on violence against women and girls and women and the economy were chosen to go to national Labour Party conference.

Senior Labour frontbench figures gave speeches or appeared on fringe panels reiterating support for closing the inequality gap, including Party Chair Anneliese Dodds, leader Keir Starmer, Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves and Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Lisa Nandy. Starmer highlighted that gender inequality has worsened under the conservative government.

Although it was held virtually it meant that the attendance was high, enabling women that normally wouldn't be able to attend due to childcare or disabilities to attend. I really enjoyed the conference.

Audrey Dinnall

Report from Disabled Members elected to the NEC

It's fair to say that what should have been a very visible year for Disabled Members, the Year of Disabled Workers, has been a very frustrating one for us as your representatives on the NEC. Anyone who was at National Delegate Conference (NDC) will understand this totally. On the last day of NDC a message from us was published in the Disabled Members newssheet. We have included this at the end of this report for the benefit of those who weren't at conference.

For most of the year, the NEC failed to get through its agenda so additional virtual meetings were scheduled in. Although virtual meetings have become a regular part of life over the last 2 years those organised by the NEC are often not accessible. Things that have caused issues for us and other members of the NEC who are disabled have included:

- Motions and resolutions being tabled for decision verbally during meetings
- Paperwork being sent out less than 24 hours before the meeting including, on one occasion, over 200 pages of paperwork
- Failure to follow standard procedures such as debating amendments before voting on substantive motions
- Some members of the NEC being allowed to speak several times while the debate is closed down before we are allowed to speak
- Speakers list and other roles for NDC being issued at the last minute
- Refusing to take points of order relating to access issues
- Some non-disabled members of the NEC being allowed to make derogatory comments in relation to access issues

Despite raising concerns in almost every meeting these issues they have not been resolved. We are sometimes told that our concerns have been noted but, unless officers step in to help, no action is taken.

This makes it difficult for us to get our point, and more importantly your views, across as we can't properly prepare in advance and sometimes struggle to follow the discussion.

The Presidential Team have also introduced a new system where if they put a star next to an agenda item it is deemed to be confidential. Roll call or named votes are also being regularly refused by the Presidential Team. This means members of the NEC are told not to report on the debate or on how people voted and, if we do, we could be subject to disciplinary action. At the July meeting the item on controversial motions from NDC, including Disabled Members motion Not in Our Name, had a star next to it. This means we would only be able to report decisions made and nothing else including how we voted – the item was not reached.

We are clear that this is not acceptable. We are accountable to UNISON's Disabled Members, to all of you. We mainly do this by providing reports to National Disabled Members Committee to be shared with regions and branches. We also reserve the right to communicate with Disabled Members on social media, online and directly.

We will always be prepared to be honest about how we represent you, how we vote and, as importantly, why we voted in certain ways.

The success of the Year of Disabled Workers is the responsibility of the Policy Development and Campaigns Committee (PDCC) as the original motion was passed at NDC in 2019. Angela has taken a lead on this as she is both a member of PDCC and the NDMC working group on the topic. Angela and others have worked hard to make the year a success but they have received little support from either PDCC or the NEC. The Chair of PDCC asked for a meeting to work on this but despite it being arranged around the Chair and Vice-Chair's availability they didn't turn up. They have not asked for it to be rearranged and have not carried out any of the actions they previously agreed to. The Chairs of all other NEC sub-committees were asked to identify actions their committees would take in support of the year but at the time of writing not one committee has done this. The Year of Disabled Workers has been reasonably successful but, to a large extent, this has been despite the NEC not because of it. PDCC is also responsible for highlighting work on the Disability Employment Charter of which UNISON is a founder member. To date PDCC have not agreed any work on this or discussed how it can be included in UNISON's employment policies.

The Cost of Living Crisis is also part of PDCC's remit and Angela has been very clear about the impact on disabled people who, according to recent research, have been hit harder than anyone else in society. At Angela's request, the officer leading on this has met with NDMC and will make sure the issues raised are included in UNISON's work on this.

Katrina's NEC committees are more internally focussed including Development and Organising (D and O) Committee who are responsible for issues relating to reasonable adjustments for members within UNISON. Katrina is working hard to progress the Reasonable Adjustment Passport which has been trialled by the National Self-Organised Committees. The passport has been used quite successfully by NDMC but we are still waiting for feedback from the other SOGs. Once this is received D and O will need to agree how to best to progress the role out of the passport system. Katrina has been working to gain support for this to be progressed to other national committees, including the NEC, as soon as possible. She is also looking at whether the current version will be suitable for conferences or if further development is needed.

We also both work closely with Sian Stockham who represents the NEC on both NDMC and TUC Disabled Workers Committee. Sian has a wealth of experience on the NEC including being Vice-President for two years. Sian's advice and support is always important but over the last year has been invaluable. We wanted to make sure all Disabled Members are aware of the role she has played and place our thanks on record for everything she does to help Disabled Members.

Finally, please feel free to come and speak to us or email us if there is anything you would like us to raise with the NEC.

We hope you have a fantastic conference.

Message from your Disabled Representatives on the NEC (Originally printed at NDC)

Disabled Members have had a really successful week at national delegate conference. Motion 10, Not in Our Name, was overwhelmingly passed on Tuesday afternoon despite some opposition.

This was followed by a very successful Year of Disabled Workers fringe on Wednesday evening at which we both spoke and then Motion 87, Review of the Equality Act, being passed unanimously on Thursday morning.

Going forward our role will be to ensure that every action in both the Disabled Members motions are implemented by the NEC as soon as possible. The actions in Motion 10 were very clear and given the huge amount of support it received there can be no reason for any delay. Rest assured we will hold the NEC to account if they fail to implement actions passed at conference and we will continue to speak up for you so that everyone knows that Disabled Members voices matter.

Angela Hamilton and Katrina Murray

Service Group Conferences

Health Conference

Well it was great to be meeting in person once again after what has been a very difficult and traumatic time within healthcare with the Covid -19 pandemic having a major impact on all off our lives and unfortunately is still here, although the Government would like us to think otherwise as the lifting of restrictions within hospitals of mask wearing now only personal choice in non-clinical areas and only in clinical areas if patients are Covid positive.



Our Disable Inequality interactive activity at Health Conference

The Conference centre was very busy with a large number of stalls all crammed into a very small area, which did make it very difficult from a disabled members perspective to move safely around, the stalls were busy with delegates/visitors which proved in my case with severe visual impairment to safely manoeuvre without colliding with someone and with a hidden disability received some nasty looks.

The Liverpool Centre can be quite tricky as you go down to the conference hall, the lifts are small and some disabled delegates/visitors in mobility scooters/wheelchairs were struggling to access the lifts as there was a large number trying to use the lifts. Another cause for concern was entering the conference centre for security purposes you had to go through a security scanner this proved very difficult for those with mobility disabilities also they closed off certain exit routes and you had to leave via an alternative route which was poorly signed with very small writing, which I failed to

see and attempted to leave the wrong way and a security officer had to point me in the right direction.

I was seated with the other SOG representatives at the back of the hall with our other delegate Linda Woods.

Day one of conference included an address from Roz Norman, Chair of Health Service Group Executive who moved the Annual Report 2021/22. There was also a key note address from Christina McAnea. Motions were then debated including on health and safety, recruitment and organising and equalities issues.

I moved the disabled members motion on Long Covid of behalf of the National Disabled Members Conference and it was agreed. Linda moved our second motion, Motion 27 The Workplace Disability Equality Standard (WDES): Two years on, a program for action which was again agreed by conference

The disabled members caucus meeting took place at lunchtime. The meeting was supposed to be held in the main hall for ease for disabled members with mobility concerns but they decided at last minute to move the meeting to another 2 levels above, which was awful, the room was difficult enough for Linda and I let alone anyone else and was to remote, they should have allowed the meeting to be held in the main hall whoever decided to move the meeting did not take into consideration the reasonable adjustments of disabled members. We had a reasonable turnout although disabled members were disgruntled by the last-minute change in venue.

We introduced ourselves and asked any speaker to introduce themselves and which branch they were from. Topics raised were as follows

- Year of the Disabled Worker
- Long Covid, Disability leave, home working and flexible working
- Conference centre accessibility - uncomfortable seats, delegates with adjustments not sat with their region distance from town, catering, lifts
- Reasonable adjustments not met even though requested prior to deadline
- Seats uncomfortable and some delegates requiring reasonable adjustments
- Disability passport
- Disabled Officer training
- Disabled Members Conference

There was good debate and questions asked and answered Katrina Murray (NEC disabled members rep) was able to answer and support Linda and me.

The sessions closed with signposting everyone to the Equalities Stall and to advise everyone to register for our workshops in June and August and to attend our Conference in October to seek support from their Branches.

On day two we had a guest speaker from the Ukrainian Health Workers union and a presentation on NHS pay, in addition to debate on motions on professional and occupational Issues, agenda for change and pay. SOC had decided that there were consequences to Motion 7 One Team One Say – Which way on pay? If 7 passed

then 8 would fall. This was debated at length and ended with a card vote. 7 passed and 8 fell.

There were also a number of focus groups on topics including Race for Equality, A just transition to a carbon neutral NHS, workload and staffing. There were also a number of evening fringe events.

Day three started with an International Workers Memorial Day Commemoration and a presentation on the member engagement project. We debated motions on defending the NHS and protecting and improving health and care services a fair and just culture in the NHS.

My overview of conference, lots of particularly important motions and issues raised, focus groups were also very good shame you can only attend one as they are all interesting and topical.

Lots on pay and will we have to prepare for strike action in the future as the signs for a low pay increase will be minimal and below inflation with the cost of living now critical, we may not have a choice, unfortunately will members be able to afford to strike and lose money.

It was an exceptionally good conference with good speakers and debates – hopefully more motions to next year's Health Service Conference being written now in earnest.

Susan Parkinson

Energy Conference

After last year's virtual conference this was the first physical conference after the two years being in lockdown due to the pandemic.

There were 12 motions submitted and one Emergency motion submitted. Out of the twelve motions two motions, Motion 7 Young workers, burnout, and the right to disconnect, the negative impact of remote digital work on young members wellbeing during covid-19 pandemic and Motion 10 Recruiting, supporting and developing young activists across the Energy service group, these both fell, as there was no one to move the motions and they were both submitted by National Young members. All other 10 motions and the emergency motions was carried.

I moved amendment 1.1 on motion one Increasing diversity within energy, amendment 4.2 on motion four Cost of living and its impact on Energy workers and I moved the motion nine, make 2022 the year of Disabled Workers in Energy workplaces, these were all carried unanimously.



Assistant National Officer Anne Pickard runs the equality stall at service group conferences

First guest speaker Christina McAnea

"You should be proud of what you have done," UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea told conference today at the union's first in-person energy conference in three years. You've been through so much in the last few years. But you've been through it together.

"Energy, despite its tiny size in comparison to some of the other service groups, punches above its weight and has a huge impact across all of the union's other sectors."

She went on to discuss the energy problem and how it was affecting customers as well as the energy workers. "Our members' livelihoods were sacrificed to pay tribute to market forces "supposed" benefits, which we were assured would drive energy prices lower," she said.

Following the General Secretaries statement, the conference got down to business, and started debating a proposal made by the National Black Members Committee on expanding diversity in the energy sector which was Motion 1.

Lindsay McNaught, Chair of the SGE, stated in a motion on the cost of living crisis and its impact on energy workers that wholesale gas prices have nearly quadrupled in the last year, with tariffs increasing by 54 percent, with the latest predictions indicating they will increase by another 46 percent in October.

She said the government's response so far demonstrates "a complete lack of comprehension of the gravity of the problem," and she urged the SGE to continue to highlight poor practise and dangerous behaviour in the energy business, which has cost members their jobs, and to advocate for more regulation.

Second guest speaker Ed Miliband MP

Ed Miliband MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Climate Change and Net Zero and he said the transition to net-zero carbon emissions, is "not about putting a green coat of paint on an unjust, unequal economy, but about the fundamental transfer of wealth power and income to working people and their families."

While the energy problem is global in scope, he admitted that the UK is especially ill-equipped to manage and respond, and that the UK's energy system is a "broken free market."

"The whole system has to reform," he added, adding that "the sharp practise of fly-by-night firms has to end." We need to replace this dysfunctional system with a public-interest-run energy system.

Conference was extended as we nearly finished the agenda business and SOC agreed for the extension.

This year conference was very well run with interesting guest speakers, especially with the increase in cost of living, fuel, and energy prices its paramount we continue the fight by showing our members concern in the demo in London on Saturday 18th June 2022.

Tansaim Hussain-Gul

Water, Environment and Transport (WET) Conference

I was honoured to again represent NDMC at WET (Water, Environment and Transport) Conference held in Brighton in June 2022. It was wonderful to be at an in-person conference and meet colleagues again.

Conference commenced at 10am and was opened by Vice President Cath Owen. After the Appointment of Tellers and SOC, Ruth Davies, Chair of the National Service Group addressed conference, remembering those we had lost during lockdown and the impact to WET companies.

Christina McAnea, General Secretary, then addressed conference, again speaking around COVID and the continued fight UNISON is doing for people's rights. Maggie Jones, Baroness Jones of Whitchurch was our second guest speaker. WET Conference had 20 motions on the agenda, however three motions fell due to no speakers (two from National Young Members Forum and one from National Black Members Committee).

I moved motion 14: make 2022 the year of disabled workers in WET workplaces, which I am pleased to report was carried.

Heather Briggs



Speakers at our fringe event celebrating the Year of Disabled Workers

Local Government Conference

Although Conference business started as normal on the Sunday morning there was definitely an atmosphere in the main conference hall. The first session was chaired by the President Paul Holmes. Almost immediately you could see and feel the different factions that could, if not managed properly, damage and possibly split UNISON!

Anyway, back to business – Tony was pulled in as a delegate at the last minute as, unfortunately, Paul Davis contracted Covid. Tony was happy to substitute, and was happy to move the motion:

- Homeworking and reasonable adjustments for National Disabled Members Committee.

Kathleen Kennedy moved the motion:

- Make 2022 the year of disabled workers in local government workplaces for the National Disabled Members Committee. Both motions were really well supported, and we got great applause when we left the podium.



Delegates at the local government conference meeting for disabled members

Also, on Sunday Tony and Kathleen chaired a meeting for disabled members at conference. It was well attended, and the main thrust of the conversation was about Reasonable Adjustment Passports where we had to explain that it had been paused during the Covid pandemic. We also talked about access issues where the disabled delegates were so far from the front of the stage and podium. There was also great excitement about 2022 being the year of the disabled workers. We were well supported during this event by our National Officer, Deirdre Costigan and our NEC colleagues, Angela Hamilton, Katrina Murray, and Sian Stockham.

Other motions that would generate some interest for our members are as follows:

- Mandatory vaccinations (SGE)
- Covid and Long Covid (SGE)
- Supporting the mental health of staff in colleges (National FE and Sixth Form Colleges)
- Beyond Covid - building a better future (Unison Renfrewshire)
- Ensuring the health and safety for local government home and hybrid workers (Scotland Region)



Local Government conference delegates Tony and Kathleen

This conference seemed strained, and we have to report that feelings were running high, and this should not be ignored.

After two days that were charged with emotion we should remember that we are the biggest trade union in the country and if we stick together and deal with internal challenges, we will get through to the other side better for it.

Tony Slaven and Kathleen Kennedy

Community Conference

Community Conference is usually held earlier in the year whereas this year it coincides with the deadline for branches submission of their Annual Financial Return (AFR) which caused a problem for some branches, including Peter's. The matter was resolved but conference did not seem as well attended as in the past. Louise was unable to attend part of the conference due to personal circumstances.

Seminar

Friday afternoon saw sector meetings for community and voluntary services, housing associations (which the President attended) and a meeting for the major charities sector committee. This was followed by a new delegate workshop briefing and then a seminar. Apologies were given by the General Secretary, Christine McAnea, who unfortunately had tested positive for Covid.

Gavin Edwards, national officer for social care talked about the work UNISON has been carrying out including enhanced data on Social Care membership, pushing the message that UNISON is 'The Union of Social Care'. Gavin talked about the impact of covid on the social care sector and workers raising issues such as lack of sick pay, inadequate PPE, testing, fragmentation and vaccinations.

Claire Williams, Northern Regional secretary gave a presentation on the Member Engagement Programme. Donna Rowe-Merriman addressed conference on home working and hybrid working which is on the increase and talked about how the workplace is changing. Kevin Stewart, MSP and Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care spoke on creating a national care service in Scotland.

Jon Richards, UNISON Assistant General Secretary, Bargaining, Negotiating and Equalities addressed conference and passed on solidarity to the anti-racism marches happening across the UK including in Glasgow where conference was being held. Jon talked about how the impact of the pandemic and how much UNISON members including frontline staff, housing staff, community workers have done over the past two years.

Conference debates

The President chaired the motions session of Conference on Saturday afternoon which prompted a walkout by some delegates, some Service Group Executive (SGE) members, and one Region removed all of their delegates.

Debate started with controversy as there was opposition to the SGE amendment to Motion 1 – Organising to achieve fairer pay in social care. The amendment sought to replace a minimum sectoral wage of £12 per hour with just a minimum sectoral wage. It also sought to change one of the actions which called for all social care to be publicly owned by adding 'where appropriate'. Our very own Graeme Ellis moved the amendment explaining that stating a figure may lead to employers imposing that amount rather than negotiating a higher amount. Graeme stated that the SGE had added 'where appropriate' because of the importance of direct payments. Graeme highlighted that direct payments have enabled the appointment of personal assistants of choice and led to independence, choice and control and enabled members to be able to continue with employment. The amendment was lost by just 1 vote. The unamended motion was carried.

Motion 4 Trans Equality in the Community Sector – Louder and Prouder! from the National LGBT+ Committee was discussed and Louise spoke in the debate in support of the motion mentioning that this was affecting members in Community, our Trans members and our members who work for Stonewall where the density of membership is over 50%.

Louise also moved Motion 5 Covid Secure Workplaces for Disabled Members in Community highlighting the difference between workplace adjustments and reasonable adjustments, the unequal impact of covid on disabled people and discrimination that disabled people experience in the workplace.

Peter moved Motion 7 Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Members in Community, highlighting the work that disabled members have done in respect of campaigning for a right to work from home as a reasonable adjustment. Louise moved our amendment to motion 16 Fair Sickness Absence for all – supporting better sickness absence for community workers with additional needs and talked about the unfairness of using sickness absence triggers particularly the Bradford Factor which treats everyone the same. Both motion 5 and 7 and this amendment were carried.

Peter was due to move our amendment to motion 14 The Death of the Office, but the substantive motion fell as the movers of the motion were not present in protest that conference was being chaired by UNISON's president. The region had indicated that they would not be accepting our amendment.

Other motions carried included the future of adult social care for LGBT+ people, the housing crisis, social care, care workers from abroad, fair pay, fragmentation, post-pandemic, supporting and organising community members, contractual sick pay and learning and organising in community.

Disabled Member Caucus

Peter chaired the Disabled Members Caucus which was attended by 7 delegates. Delegates were encouraged to speak in support of our motions if they felt able to do so. Peter also reported on the discussions held with the Region on Amendment 14.1 and highlighted the dates for the Caucus Network days.

Workshops

There were a number of workshops and Peter attended the one on the increasing participation project. He called for better use of the skills of retired members, and by extension disabled members.

Although a conference session had been scheduled for Sunday morning, this was not needed and conference finished early – better timetabling might have meant a less gruelling day on Saturday where there was a lack of breaks.

Louise Ashworth and Peter Daley

Virtual Higher Education Conference

Unfortunately our delegate was unable to attend conference.

Police and Justice Conference

I attended as the only Delegate to the Conference from the National Disabled Member Committee.

As with most if not all Service Group Conferences it was a short and very friendly conference with great opportunities for networking.

There were twenty motions passed with the two submitted by the National Disabled Members Committee being the last two motions of the Conference.

The motions were:

- Accessing Reasonable Adjustments during COVID-19
- Homeworking as a Reasonable Adjustment in Post COVID Police and Justice Workplace

Both motions were moved by myself with my speeches outlining how the motions will assist Disabled Members.

I am very pleased to report that both motions were pass unanimously with no amendments.

It was a great pleasure to represent the National Disabled Members Committee and move motions for a second time and my own Service Group's National Conference.

Michelle Edwards

Self Organised Group Conferences

Virtual Black Members Conference

I attend the National Black Members virtual conference in May. Apart from the chair and the speakers I could not see anyone, and which was strange but due to covid on the rise this was the only to have a conference. There were some interesting speaks over the two days and this was good and both Kabba and Rakiya manged the conference really well. Due not being quorate conference suspended Standing orders which meant the debates would not form policy of NBMC but would guide its work over the next year.

When the conference did start even though a little late but made up by the speakers starting with Christina McAnea giving her commitment to work with the NBMC to tackle racism in unison. This was giving Black members a voice. We then went on to hear Kudsia Batool, TUC Head of Equalities and Strategy, talking on the work of the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce. She touched on the death of George Floyd which affected us all in 2020.

The president then spoke, he talked about a racist society and the need to be anti-racist, and the team would look at bring change in the Union to facilitate conversations on race equality.

Elizabeth Cameron was the speaker on the second day of the conference about how she has been involved in unison and over the years how she has been an activist. She spoke about intersectionality and asked delegates to support women, disabled and LGBT+ colleagues in providing the support they need to function effectivity in the workplace. The best point she mentioned was we are like a family when we have different points of view. When we get together, we as Black people we can achieve anything and for this we need to get involved.

The Mandela award winner Kemoy Walker spoke and told us how much it meant to him to get the award.

The part I really enjoyed was the facts that were shared by the chair, I did not get to write these down, but it would be good to have these and share them with all of us.

Motions

It was strange moving the motions in a virtual platform, and I had to move two at the conference (I was more nervous on line then moving a motion at a live conference):

- Motion 3 - Covid and Black disabled workers – learning the lessons for the recovery
- Motion 16 - What are they hiding? - Black disabled people and PIP

Both of the motion were voted through.

Kuldeep Bajwa

Women's Conference

Women's Conference 2022 was a virtual conference due to Covid and not knowing what the situation would be at the time. It was my first Women's conference, so I was disappointed at the virtual element but understood the need and the travel aspect was not something I was entirely comfortable with at the time anyway.

The conference moved through business quickly, as all speakers had to register beforehand – this meant if someone was moved to speak on a motion they could not do so, which is a downside to virtual conferences. Not many speakers registered given the tight deadline to do so, so motions moved and were voted on quickly. A motion of interest was submitted – motion 6 'NEC Election of UNISON President June 2021' but it fell due to having no one to move the motion. This would have been an interesting one to listen to, especially given the committee's stance on some of the NEC resolutions and choices.

NDMC's two motions were 16th and 20th on the conference agenda - Neelo moved motion 16 'Violence Against Disabled Women and Domestic Abuse', which was carried with amendments and Nicola moved motion 20 'Disabled Women Paying the Price of Punitive Government Policy' – we made our speeches from home, joining virtually through Teams just before the motion was due. Both motions were passed.



Nicola Moran speaking at UNISON Women's Conference

There was one controversial motion at the conference, which was motion 23 'For Safety – end support for the 'Nordic Model' – which was a motion around sex work, noting that there is no legal model in the world that has been shown to increase or decrease the number of people who sell sex – stating that the only thing laws can change is whether people, including women do sex work in dangerous conditions or in safer conditions. There was opposition for not ending support for the Nordic Model and there was support for it. It was the most debated motion of the conference.

The motion was ultimately carried by delegates – we do not have voting rights from NDMC so just listened to the debate.

The Conference was interesting but finished earlier than planned both days because we moved through business quickly and there were a very limited number of speakers. Some feedback from a disabled members perspective though –

- The motion number and name did not appear on screen while it was being spoken about – this was an accessibility issue and hard to keep track of where we were at times.
- The deadline to register to speak was very short – which we think did not enable many people to register to fully participate in the conference.
- The conference really wasn't the same as in person, we missed that aspect. There wasn't the opportunity to discuss things with other delegates and the conference app was not opened up for this conference meaning you couldn't chat virtually either. It felt isolating for a conference, which usually feels social and people can take more opportunity to learn from each other and talk.

Nicola Moran and Neelo Farr

LGBT+ Conference

LGBT+ conference was held in November 2021 in Brighton. There were no workshops held due to Covid restrictions. There were a total of 35 motions on the agenda many of which I was able to support as they fitted in with our policy.

Despite the restrictions conference was well attended.

A good range of speakers spoke on motions.

Graeme Ellis

4. Caucus reports

Deaf (native British Sign Language users) caucus

We, Iain and Gillian from Deaf Caucus, met with our regular National Disabled Members Committee this year which was nice as we felt it was much better to meet the committee fact-to-face, rather than virtual meetings which could be a pain for our needs - in case the connection crashed or we could not see clearly the interpreters on screen or their sign language. However, we of course are aware of ongoing Covid-19 which seems not to be stopped for a very long time.

We were very delighted that the British Sign Language (BSL) Bill had been passed earlier this year, after fighting for it to become a law for 19 years after the government officially recognised our beautiful sign language but did not do anything about it until now. We have now got the BSL Act 2022! So, a big thanks to the 2021 conference who had voted to support for one of our motions about BSL Act. However, we have another motion for this year's conference asking for your support in protecting and preserving our language so please support this motion.

We thank in particular, one of our National Committee members Graeme Ellis, who has worked hard to investigate the Access to Work and PIP etc for Deaf Caucus as he is the expert in that area. The issues over appeals and tribunals are still ongoing which does waste the taxpayers' money. That can be avoided if the PIP assessors can be trained properly.

The information about how to prevent being scammed, scammers that had preyed on deaf people, is now onto our website from Bradford Talking Media which we hope will help us to understand and identify scams.

We are now aware of the ongoing crisis in the Cost of Living and we do hope that 2023 will bring you a better, happy and healthy future.

Iain Scott-Burdon and Gillian Jeffrey
Deaf Caucus Liaison Reps

Black caucus

The Black caucus met on 1st April and all committee members we asked to promote this meeting the disabled Black members network meeting which was held on 23rd June. The Meeting was organised by Unison National Equality Unit. The networking meeting on the 23rd of June was our first meeting for the year which was to be an in person meeting however, a virtual meeting was held due to the National Rail Strike.

The meeting was well attended by disabled black members from various regions. Members gave feedback about the 2022 (Virtual) Black Member Conference and 'low turnout'. Members were encouraged to approach their Branch if they wanted to attend the 2022 Disabled Members Conference and it was suggested that it could be useful to have a Stall at the Conference to improve input, support and visibility for the SOG's/Networks.

Feedback was giving to the Disabled Black Members on what the Disabled Black Members caucus is currently working on, plus highlighted the issues on fair representation and proportionality amongst black disabled members which lead into further discussion on the matter.



Motion ideas for 2022 Disabled Members Conference were discussed and decided on. Thanks went to Group members Lola, Peter, Tanzim, Tara and Judy who agreed to draft the Motions to take to the Conference on behalf of the Black disabled members caucus.

Following on from discussions at the meeting we agreed to draft three motions to Disabled Members Conference on behalf of the Black Disabled Members Caucus.

1. Long Covid, Access to PIP, Lack of Cultural Awareness.
2. Smashing All Equality Pay Gaps
3. Olivia's Case - Policing the Black Disabled Community". This motion has been ruled out of order,

We had another Disabled Black Members Network Meeting on Wednesday 10th August at UNISON Centre. The purpose of the meeting, was looking at preparing

amendments for our Notational Disabled conference which must be specific to disabled Black members and be in line with the NEC's Aims and Objectives.

At the meeting we agreed on 3 motions below to be prioritised:

1. Motion 15: Long Covid With Black Disabled Workers Access to PIP & Lack of Cultural Awareness.
2. Motion 2: Smashing All Equality Pay Gaps
3. Motion 23: Trans Ally Training

We also had guest speaker Narmada Thiranagama, UNISON National Officer, who described and spoke on the key policy areas affecting Black members.

Tara Thomas
Black Caucus Liaison Rep

LGBT+ caucus

It feels such a long time since we all met in person at our caucus meeting at the 2019 Conference in Brighton. The caucus finally met face to face during the National Committee meeting in April.

The caucus has been involved with the work of the committee subgroups, moving on work from conference 2021.

With all network days cancelled for 2020, we planned to hold our first face to face network meeting at UNISON Centre in June, but due to uncertainty around train travel, the meeting moved to virtual. The meeting in June was very well attended with 26 total attendees. For many attendees this was their first time joining a national caucus meeting. Unfortunately, we had to cancel our August meeting due to unavailability of British Sign Language interpreters.

Carl gave an update on the work the committee has been able to complete or are working on. One topic of discussion was around having more hybrid meetings going forward as some members are unable to travel to UNISON Centre to attend network events.

The caucus have been supporting the Year of the Disabled worker events throughout the year, including attending the Celebration event at National Delegate Conference. Carl was the editor of the NDC Disability News Sheet this year.

We had LGBT+ representation on the national delegation to TUC Disabled worker Virtual Conference in which UNISON's motion promoting the Disability Workers Charter and Year of the Disabled Worker was passed and chosen as the conference motion to go to National Congress.

Two of our motions made it on to this year's disabled member's conference agenda but unfortunately our motion Moneypox: Time to stop stigmatisation and discrimination was ruled out of order. However, we were able to work with the national officer and the policy unit to ensure UNISON issued a new guide to supporting members with Monkeypox at the end of August via the E-Activist Bulletin.

We look forward to seeing you all at our meeting in Brighton this October.

Carl Phillips and Leigh Fredson
LGBT+ Caucus Liaison reps

Women's caucus

The Women's Caucus initially met at the National Disabled Members Committee first meeting in April 2022 online due to rail strike. We held another caucus meeting on the 6th of August in Stevenage, followed by a women's caucus network meeting on the 10th of August at UNISON centre in London which was well attended. All the points below were discussed at the three caucus meetings we had:

- Introduction of New members & what the networking meeting is all about
- We had a guest speaker Josie Irwin who gave an educational talk with statistics on women's equality in the workplace. it was a very engaging topic which was impactful. Key dates from her talk October 18th international world day for menopause and 25th of November violence against women & girls
- Motions to National Disabled members conference, Motion 16 Towards an inclusive women's health strategy. our other motion: implements the united nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities was ruled out of order
- Mentoring for women based on it breaching the agreement of the political fund. At the recent women caucus networking meeting we decided to appeal against the standing order decision to rule it out of order.
- We also agreed to amend the motion ruled out of order & put it through other national conferences coming up next year.
- Our three-priority motion for debate at the National disabled members conference are: 1. motion 5 uncovering the impact of Covid 19 on disabled members, 2. Disabled people & the cost of living crisis
- Accredited training on domestic violence, 3.our motion towards an inclusive health strategy.
- We make amendments to the following motions 3, 4, 5,6,7,10,12 to make it more relevant to disabled women's issues. some wonderful women volunteered to move the amendments at conference.
- Misogyny & sexism against disabled women
- Suggested topics for Fringe; Campaigning & Bargaining, PIPs application process, Ethnicity gender pay gap
- Encourage employers to sign up to disability employment charter (100 employers have signed it)
- Post cards about disabled members SOG
- Incorporate BHM into conference
- Diversity handbook review updates
- Network elections at the conference

Our next caucus meeting will be at the conference in October.

Naturally the focus of the Caucus are the two network meetings that take place in June and August. Whilst participation in these meetings has been increasing over the last few years, the physical participation in the meetings this year has been the best yet. Women obviously have missed the physical and social interactions which shows that women valued being able to participation. Thankfully we managed to make a meeting with diverse participants with a young member attending for the first

time. The caucus pulled together three motions and several amendments.

Regardless of what happens with COVID, there is obviously a desire for disabled women to network together and be part of a diverse knowledgeable group

Lola Oyewusi and Kuldeep Bajwa
Women's Caucus Liaison reps

National Disabled Members Committee 2022

Eastern

Michelle Edwards (until January)

Joanna Vanderhoof

Suzanne Williams (from March)

East Midlands

Tracie Bonnici

Paul Meadows

Greater London

Toby Morrison and Seamus Naghten (Job-share)

Jacqueline Sheehan

Northern

Stephen Powers

Sandie Robinson

Northern Ireland

Amanda Sweetlove

Mandy Rutherford

North West

Graeme Ellis (NDMC Co-Chair)

Sharron Nicoll

Scotland

Margaret Gilmurray

Tony Slaven (NDMC Deputy Co-Chair)

South Eastern

Abdul Rahman

Susan Parkinson

South West

Tara Thomas

Carole Hamilton

Cymru/Wales

Neelo Farr

Steve Gucci (from July)

Peter Williams (until May)

West Midlands

Paul Davis

Nicola Moran

Yorkshire and Humberside

Kuldeep Bajwa

Black members Caucus

Tansaim Hussein-Gul

Lola Oyewusi

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Plus Caucus

Leigh Fredson

Carl Phillips

Deaf (native BSL users) Caucus

Gillian Jeffrey

Iain Scott-Burdon

National Black Members Committee

Manjula Kumari

Carol Sewell (until April)

Pam Sian (from May)

National LGBT+ Committee

Louise Ashworth

Bev Miller

National Women's Committee

Elizabeth Cameron

Tania Earnshaw (until March)

Sonya Howard (from March)

NEC

Katrina Murray

Sian Stockham

Angela Hamilton