



NATIONAL YOUNG MEMBERS FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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INTRODUCTION

from the Chair of the National Young Members Forum

Dear friends,

Thank you for joining us at our second young members' conference. I continue to remain inspired by the work that young members have done in our branches and regions as we continue to organise and campaign around the issues that matter to young members.

Just last month, during TUC Young Workers Month, it was great to see so many of you attend the webinars chaired by members of the forum on becoming a green rep and the role of a young members officer.

In April we launched a survey of young workers focusing on the cost-of-living crisis, mental health and becoming active in UNISON. This allowed us to identify key issues for young members which would form part of our workplan. During April, we also sent a strong delegation to TUC Young Workers conference where debated key motions and had lots of great speakers from UNISON.

I am pleased to see this year that we have been able to bring back fringe meetings which I would encourage you all to attend, they're a great opportunity to network with other young members and learn new skills.

Lastly, at the time of writing, we are currently facing a large ballot amongst our members in the NHS. On behalf of the forum I would like to send our solidarity to all our NHS staff and young workers across all unions who are balloting or taking part in industrial action. We are all with you.

Have a brilliant conference!

Jess McGuire

Chair

National Young Members Forum

THE NATIONAL YOUNG MEMBERS FORUM

The National Young Members Forum (NYMF) is UNISON's national committee representing young members. Every region nominates two delegates to the Forum, and the two NEC representatives for young members also sit on the Forum. It meets formally four times a year, with occasional informal briefings in between these quarterly in-person meetings.

The NYMF was delighted to return to in-person meetings in 2022. We held our AGM in April, in Newcastle, welcoming many new regional delegates, electing new officers and nominating Forum members as delegates to conferences and committees.

We also agreed our workplan for the year. For the first time this was based on the priorities agreed at Young Members Conference 2021, including mental health, the recruitment and development of young activists, quality jobs and progression opportunities, and working with other parts of the union on issues important to young workers such as the climate, domestic abuse, and of course the cost of living crisis.

The National Young Members Forum also agreed some changes to conference to be more inclusive, in particular a move to directly elect delegates to conferences from the young membership, rather than appointing these through the Young Members Forum.

We held meetings through the year in UNISON Centre, agreeing motions for conferences and taking forward our workplan, including planning and agreeing conference arrangements and plans for TUC Young Workers Month in November.

RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISING

Recruitment of young members has slowed alongside the slowing of recruitment to UNISON generally. The NYMF has discussed possible reasons for this, including that young members may be more difficult to reach in an era of increased home working.

The NYMF heard from UNISON's Head of Strategic Organising on the development of a new organising strategy for UNISON, and were pleased to discuss some of the issues which affect organising young workers.

In 2022 we launched our email newsletter, sent quarterly to all young members in UNISON who have provided email addresses. This received strong feedback and had an excellent 'open rate', and allowed us to communicate directly with UNISON young members to promote our work and campaigns and to encourage support for important issues such as UNISON's cost of living campaign 'Together We Rise'. Work continues to revamp and relaunch our social media channels.

One priority of UNISON's NYMF is to encourage more young people to take an active role within the union and stand for roles as stewards, branch officers, and committee members at regional and national level.

To this end we re-ran our popular webinar 'What does a Young Members Officer do?' a combination of presentation and panel discussion from active and former Young Members Officers, in November 2022 to mark TUC Young Workers month. We also ran a session on Becoming a Green Rep and promoted UNISON's Green Network to all young members.

We have continued to widely promote our report called 'Getting Active in UNISON'. The report included a number of recommendations to branches and regions interested in getting more young members active and involved in UNISON. We have continued to work with the Development and Organising sub-committee of the National Executive Council and discuss issues around recruitment and organisation of young members.

BARGAINING AND EQUALITIES

In May 2020 we surveyed UNISON's young members about mental health, asking about the relationship between mental health and work. The results found that 80% of young workers had experienced a mental health problem in the last year, and nearly 80% said their mental health problems were either directly linked to their work, or partially related to their work.

We launched our report at the Equality Fringe at National Delegate Conference, and are planning a national campaign on work, mental health and young workers, highlighting the ways that trade unions can address mental health in the workplace.

We were very pleased to work with the National LGBT+ Committee to launch the LGBT+ Young Members Network, aimed at being an informal but lively organising group for young LGBT+ members. So far the LGBT+ young members network has agreed the themes and topics for motions from the National LGBT+ Committee to Young Members Conference, and has an active WhatsApp group. We hope to spread this form of informal networking into other groups as a way of getting more young people active in the union.

Bruna Costa and Jess McGuire sit on the Equality Liaison Committee as representatives from the NYMF. The Equality Liaison Committee brings together the NEC representatives with representatives from the National Self-Organised Group Committees and National Young Members Forum and gives

The NYMF has continued to promote the Young Workers Charter as a bargaining tool, highlighting the bargaining and workplace priorities most important to young members and to encourage employers to take action on the key concerns of younger workers:

pay, fair contracts, equality at work, decent apprenticeships and development and progression activities.

We have continued to work with the service groups to improve recruitment and organisation of young members – this year we organised a well-attended fringe at Local Government Conference as well as a session at the Energy Branch Seminar.

CAMPAIGNING AND INFLUENCING

Mental health has been one of the key campaigning areas for UNISON's National Young Members Forum in 2022, following our survey of young members. We have widely publicised our survey report, highlighting the experiences of young workers, and are planning a union-wide campaign in 2023 about mentally healthy workplaces and the role of trade unions in improving mental health at work.

The Cost of Living Crisis has also been a key area for young members. We publicised the TUC Lobby of Parliament in November to UNISON young members, encouraging them to sign up to lobby their MPs and tell them directly how the cost of living was impacting them. At Retired Members conference, we were delighted to be invited to take part in a workshop highlighting the importance of inter-generational solidarity in campaigning against the cost of living crisis.

We have also supported UNISON's work on green issues and climate, encouraging young members to join UNISON's Green Network and continue the campaigning work we started during COP26 in Glasgow in 2021. As part of TUC Young Workers Month we organised a webinar on the role of the Green Rep – now a rulebook position in UNISON.

Labour Link

Jess McGuire attended the 2022 Labour Women's Conference on behalf of the NYMF about which she reported:

"It was great to hear lots of good debates during conference and I enjoyed being a UNISON delegate. This was the second conference that had been held virtually due to Covid and

hopefully next year this conference can return to an in-person conference.

Jess was also the NYMF delegate to UNISON's Labour Link Forum in July 2022.

Trades Union Congress

UNISON's young members continue to be fully involved in the Trades Union Congress (TUC) Young Workers Forum, with our current delegates being Lilly Boulby and Sarah Walsh.

The 2022 Young Workers Conference took place in April and UNISON's motions on Mental Health, Burnout, And the Right to Disconnect and Building a Lasting Trade Union Movement - Young Workers are the Future were supported by conference.

Although UNISON's motion on mental health was not chosen to be the TUC Young Workers Forum submission to TUC conference, we were pleased that a similar motion on mental health, moved by USDAW, was sent to Congress by the TUC Young Workers.

UNISON CONFERENCES

The first ever Young Members Conference from 3-5 December 2021 in Cardiff was a great success, with excellent feedback. So many young members have commented how pleased they are that young members now have a full, decision-making conference. We're delighted that this year's conference will include a programme of workshops and speakers, and for the first time at Young Members Conference 2022 young members will elect delegates to represent the National Young Members Forum at UNISON's Self-Organised Group and Service Group conferences. We hope this will ensure we have young delegates at all UNISON Conferences, something we have occasionally struggled with this year.

Owen Michael and Eleesha Kyriakis represented the NYMF at the UNISON's National Delegate Conference (NDC) in June 2022. The NYMF submitted two motions to NDC, and our motion *Young workers, burnout and the Right to Disconnect*, was debated and carried by conference. Our second motion, *A Focus on Apprentices*, was not reached on the agenda and like all other unreached business will be considered by the National Executive Council (NEC) in the course of the year.

Reporting on National Delegate Conference, Owen Michael wrote:

Whilst there were some contentious debates at Conference at times I thought there was also for much of it a general feeling of unity around finding out the issues people had at work across Local Government and across other sectors and on what we needed to do to deal with them including getting strike ready.

There was also a lot of quite comradely meeting and discussion between young members that I thought enabled a

lot of us to get to know each other better and to learn about different issues for young members.

We also held a well-attended and lively young members meeting at National Delegate Conference, and were happy to revive the Young Members Conference social on the Tuesday evening. In order to make young delegates feel more confident at conference, we provided a full briefing on conference to all young delegates, and also set up a WhatsApp group open to all young delegates to conference. This got excellent feedback and we will repeat this in future.

Isla Watson and Belle Bradley were the NYMF delegates to National Women's Conference, held online in February 2022. They moved our motion *An end to violence against women and girls*, which was passed by conference.

On behalf of the NYMF, Elliott Carter attended Health Conference in April 2022, where our motions *Mental health: a trade union issue* and *Recruiting, supporting and developing young activists across the Health service group* were supported by conference.

Owen Michael and Eleesha Kyriakis were the NYMF delegates to Local Government Conference, in Brighton in June 2022, where our motion *Recruiting, Supporting and Developing Young Activists Across the Local Government Service Group* was composited with similar motions, including one from the Local government Service Group Executive. The composite was supported, and prompted a lively debate. Eleesha also participated in the fringe we organised at Local Government, Organising and Recruiting Young Workers, along with Alex Tibbey from South West Region. The session was

chaired by Inez Kirk from the Local Government Service Group Executive.

Ryan Hopkins attended Disabled Members Conference which was held in Brighton in October 2022.

Owen Michael and Bruna Costa attended UNISON's LGBT+ conference in Edinburgh in November 2022, where they moved our motion *Supporting Young Trans Workers in UNISON* and an amendment to a motion on *Recruiting and Organising Young LGBT+ Members*.

REGIONAL REPORTS

The Regional Young Members Forums continue to be a key site for young members to meet, network, organise and campaign.

Regional Young Member Forums are open to all young members interested in getting involved in their local areas – you don't have to be delegated by your branch to go along – and organise local campaigns and projects.

Every Regional Forum can elect an officer group and nominates two young members to represent the Region on the National Young Members Forum. If you are interested in getting more involved in your regional forum, contact your Regional Young Members Forum; details are available here:

Cymru/Wales

Over the year the activities of the young members has been in waves, before August we had no regional lead for the young members and only within the last few months, Tom Hemmings with the help of Calvin Smeda (Regional Lead for Equalities) have taken over the role of supporting the young members from a regional perspective since August

In that time we have set a few aims including:

- a) Revitalise the young members group
- b) Advertise and encourage Young Members to attend the conference
- c) Set the ball rolling for setting up a Young Members forum / weekend with a meeting including the AGM

Since taking over we have started writing regular newsletter to members via their branches which advertised local events including recent activities with the TUC where they worked with trade unionists from Sweden.

Since the start of the young members group being re-energised we have heavily focused on two main events, the young members conference and the Cymru/Wales young members' weekend.

For conference in Bournemouth, we have a full house of delegates attending. And the young members regional weekend we are currently in the process of

coordinating 2 education events on employment law (young members specific) and leadership and aspiring managers. Within this weekend we hope to coordinate the annual AGM and direction for the young members, to support and help them with their campaigns and objectives

It is still early days with the Young Members but with big ambitions and one which we hope will help with the long-term sustainability of the group.

Eastern

This year began with new faces joining the Eastern Region young members committee. With the long serving chair, Jordan, entering his final year on the committee before reaching 27, the AGM included succession planning and a decision to move to having co-chairs. This has allowed the committee to prepare for change and to grow stronger.

It was decided that one of the points of focus for the year would be around sexism in the workplace and how it affects young women. To this end the committee commissioned a specialist young women's assertiveness course. The course was well attended, received positive feedback and we hope it will become a regular part of the region's education programme.

We were lucky enough to have Lilly Boulby, the Young Members representative for the UNISON NEC attend one of the meetings where a vigorous discussion took place around the importance of union organising for young people. The committee has also relaunched it's 2019 campaign "Uncomfortable Yet" to raise awareness of sexual harassment. This is an issue that unfortunately refuses to go away.

East Midlands

This year has been one of renewal following the pandemic for the Forum. It began with the inaugural Young Members' Conference which, for many Forum members, was their first time attending a trade union conference and one of the first opportunities for them to meet in person since the pandemic. Many of our delegates spoke from the conference floor on issues they were passionate about, taking advantage of the opportunity to develop their public speaking skills and confidence.

A real highlight of the year so far has been the training weekend the Forum organised for Young Members in the East Midlands in September. The weekend was well attended and ended with all delegates committing to become trained

reps and to each have five organising conversations with other young members in their branches before our next meeting in November.

The Forum is also incredibly proud to be fielding a full delegation for Young Members' Conference in December and have submitted two motions based on the priorities of the Forum which have been discussed throughout the year. Ahead of the submission deadline, we held a motion writing workshop with an experienced member of the Local Government Standing Orders Committee to help members think through how they wanted to word their motions and ensure they made it onto the agenda.

As part of Young Workers Month, we will be combining our next meeting in November with a phone bank (and pizza!) for the NHS ballot. Nottingham. It's been the Forum's aim to make meetings as active and social as possible, which has gone down well with members.

The Forum has built an excellent cohort of active members that we hope will take up officer positions at the AGM and continue to develop as trade unionists, activists and leaders within in our union.

North West

Since re-founding in January we have been a very active young members forum- with primarily our focuses being on training our young members and political education of our members. We have had multiple organising training events in person and on zoom where we looked at the principles of organising, how to get involved in UNISON (on a branch level/regionally/nationally), organising conversations and identifying the organic leader in the workplace. Our members then have become more confident to go back to their branches and undergo training to become a workplace rep or branch rep. We have a number of active workplace reps on our committee and active in the forum.

A good example of an event we did was around "organising conversations" where we did a morning of training around this and then phone banked young members in the afternoon, encouraging them to get active in the union and join our network.

We also had a political school in March where we spent a weekend covering topics like the Spanish Civil War, Refugees, Cuba, How to be active in your union and the Law and Justice system. This was a great weekend with 15 young unison activists. Furthermore to support the international solidarity work that

we do as a Union, we sent 3 young members to Cuba as part of a May Day solidarity brigade.

As well as an active place in our branches and regional council and regional committees- we have had a presence outside of UNISON and outside of our regions as a young members network. Our members have spoken at events such as the People's Assembly and made links with other Young members groups such as the RMT young members. One of our chairs spoke at National conference at the Cuba Solidarity Fringe.

We have also supported and continue to support UNISONs national and regional ballots- including phone-banking as a forum for the NHS ballot and will be phoning for the upcoming HE ballots. We wish to continue this work to ensure that as a Young members network we are actively playing our part in this necessary work.

We have many things planned for the upcoming year including a continuing focus on political education, international solidarity and organising in the workplace and region.

Northern

The Northern young members group have been going through a transitional year. Many of our young activists have aged out, and we are rebuilding our group with a strong committee and core group of activists who are working hard to plan and carry out activity within their branches and across the region.

The group is still meeting regularly via Teams, and we have also held a number of in-person events including a "Young Members Development Day" which was attended by new and existing activists where we had workshops on motion writing, getting involved as a UNISON activist, and recruitment planning for regional and branch activity during Young Workers Month. As well as this, we welcomed young trade unionists from Germany where we shared experiences of organising as young trade union members, and shared best practice and ideas for recruiting and organising young workers.

Young Members are continuing to be active within their branches, attending and reporting back to branch committees, supporting and holding their own recruitment activities and attending regional events including Pride, Durham Miners Gala and Newcastle Mela. Members are also involved in the regional SOGs groups, ensuring that young members voices are heard across UNISON.

Northern Ireland

Young Members Month 2021 the young members forum highlighted their You Matter Campaign, taking control of the UNISON regional social media pages on the last Friday of each week in young member's month highlighting issues such as, climate justice, career opportunities, young members mental health in the work place and rights at work.

Increasing participation remains a key issue, with the majority of young members who had attended the Forum in 2021 no longer eligible to attend as they have now reached the age of 27. However, these members have agreed to support the current young members with their campaigns. We thank them for their contribution during their time on the Forum and will continue to support them engaging with their branch.

A lot of the work of the Forum this year has focused on activities addressing the issues members faced during Covid. The forum hosted a series of online meetings and used the social media platform to highlight these issues.

The Young Members Forum launched their 'Snacks and Facts' campaign, aimed at educating young members on the role of trade unions and dealing with workplace issues.

Scotland

Scottish Young Members held their first in person committee meeting since Covid in November, and our Young Members were welcomed by Tracey Dalling – Scotland's first woman Regional Secretary.

In August of 2022 we held our residential training weekend, where we welcomed many new Young Members from across Scotland. Introducing them to our Officers and new regional staff support. Our training weekend included Motion writing, Speaking with confidence, Communications & Campaigning and much more. Scottish Young Members have approached the learning and organising committee and highlighted training they would like to have available in the regional training calendar for 2023.

Scottish Young members have already made commitments for organising and campaigning in 2023 which include digital organising, collaborating with other regional committees and additional residential training. Our Annual General meeting will be held in March 2023 where Scottish Young Members will update their constitution to reflect the current committee.

South East

The South East Young Members' Forum initially started with 5 members this year. Unfortunately, this year we have struggled to maintain engagement of members and lost one due to aging out at 27. This year we have run a number of training sessions including a day at UNISON centre which covered a number of different topics including employment law and a guest speaker.

During our forum meetings there has been lively debates about the war in Ukraine, how disabilities affect Young Members', and how best to encourage Young Members to get more involved in UNISON. We have 10 delegates attending Young Members' Conference in December, all of whom, have recently got more involved in the union. We are positive about the outlook of putting together a larger forum in 2023. We are due to have our AGM in early February where we hope our conference delegates will take up positions on the South East Forum.

South West

In 2022, the South West Young Members network had a great year of activity. The biggest of these was around "The Right to Disconnect". The pioneering work on this has worked its way from our regional young members forum, to the first ever young members national conference and was tabled for debate at UNISON's national delegate conference in Brighton earlier this year. This was due to the effort that all the young members from the region put in.

Special mention goes to Maria Altoe, who won the regional young member of the year award this year. She was the Comms officer for the Young Members and worked on the right to disconnect campaign, monthly newsletters, infographics and utilising TikTok that had a great impact on how we communicate with Young Members in the South West.

Also, a number of young members attended the regional Get Active event, which they found useful and helpful with their future ambitions. There has been a drop off in membership in the Southwest sadly due to lots of members who have now passed 27 years old and aged out. We have a full list of delegates for conference in December and have provisionally agreed some new committee members who want to get involved.

West Midlands

West Midlands Young Members Forum is in the process of regrouping as unfortunately a large number of members have “Aged Out”. A plan is being put in place to try and reach the large number of Young Members who work in Social Care and do not have a traditional workplace so therefore may never had interaction with their UNISON branch.

Whilst the last year has been difficult we hope to have an active and vibrant Young Members Forum this time next year.

Yorkshire and Humberside

It has been a difficult year for the young members forum, key members ‘aged out’ through lockdown or have relocated. A relaunch is currently in the planning stages.

CONFERENCE 2021 MOTIONS

The following motions were passed at Young Members Conference 2022, and the actions taken on each are listed below.

1. Right to Disconnect: The Negative Impact of Remote Digital Work on Young Members' Well-Being during the COVID-19 Pandemic
2. Young workers, burnout, and mentally healthy workplaces
3. Mental Health, Homelessness and LGBT+ Young People
<p>We submitted a motion bringing together these topics to National Delegate Conference, where this was prioritised for debate and passed by conference. Work continues on building a national campaign on the Right to Disconnect and young workers mental health. The LGBT+ young members network will be fully involved in highlighting the impact of mental health on young LGBT+ workers.</p> <p>We also submitted a motion on these themes to TUC Young Workers Conference, where it was carried. Our motion was not selected to go to TUC Congress, but a very similar motion on mental health was chosen as the Young Workers Forum submission to Congress, where it was carried. We have promoted the Right to Disconnect across the union as part of our report on young members mental health, and a national campaign is being planned on young workers, mentally health workplaces, and the right to disconnect.</p>
4. A Focus on Apprentices
<p>We have promoted UNISON's Apprenticeship Charter on social media and as part of our work with UNISON's service groups. We continue to be involved with UNISON's work campaigning for better conditions and pay for apprentices and we continue to promote the Young Workers Charter calling for quality apprenticeships.</p>
5. Young workers and quality job: development and progression
<p>We continue to promote UNISON's Young Workers Charter across the union, including to the service groups and the Regional Young Members Forums; this stresses the importance of good development and progression opportunities to young workers. As part of our work advising the service groups on recruitment and development of young activists, we have highlighted the importance of the union's educational offer to young</p>

members, including UNISON's training workshops on progression and personal development.

6. Climate change and young LGBT+ members

As part of Young Members Conference 2022 we have organised a workshop on the climate crisis but more work remains to be done on highlighting the specific impact on LGBT+ workers.

We also worked with UNISON's international section in November 2021 to arrange an international speaker as part of our webinar ahead of COP26: a Jamaican trade unionist who spoke about her role as a disaster preparedness expert and her trade union activism campaigning on the climate crisis.

7. Young Worker's role in Greening Public Services post COP26

We supported the rule change which was passed at National Delegate Conference on making the Green Rep a rulebook position. As part of Young Workers Month we organised a webinar on the role of the Green Rep, and invited NEC member Stephen Smellie to speak on UNISON's work on climate including greening public services. The aim of the webinar was to encourage more young members to consider taking on the role of the Green Rep. We have also promoted UNISON's Green Network through our email newsletter to young members.

8. Domestic Abuse – a trade union and workplace issue

We have organised a workshop on misogyny and sexual harassment at Young Members Conference 2022. Our liaison delegate to the National Women's Committee continues to report back to the National Young Members Forum on the work being done by that committee on domestic abuse, including campaigning for domestic abuse protections in the workplace and promoting the UNISON model policy on domestic violence and abuse.



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