

# 2023 National Community Conference and Seminar

## UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

**Bournemouth International Centre**

**03 Mar 2023 04 Mar 2023**

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### **Organising and Recruitment**

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#### **1. Young Members in Community**

Conference notes that UNISON membership is in decline and the current average age of a UNISON rep is over 50;

In many Community workplaces, young workers are less likely to join a trade union, and those who do join are less likely to develop as an active member;

An increasing number of young people are going to university, and so many young people are entering the workforce later in life, particularly the public sector workforce and consequently remain Young Members for a shorter period.

If we fail to reverse our membership decline and fail to effectively recruit and develop young members into activists, we will soon face a crisis in UNISON's survival.

Conference further notes:

That the "All Work and Low Pay" report by the Living Wage Foundation (using data gathered through quantitative research of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, the Labour Force Survey and Omnibus polling of more than 2,000 UK adults) found that 58.4% of 16–19-year-olds are paid less than the real living wage in the charity sector.

Conference believes:

As the representative bodies of young members, National Young Members Forum (NYMF), Regional Young Members Forums (RYMF) and Branch Young Members Forums are the most effective and relevant arm of the union to address the young workers crisis and require the necessary resources and training to effectively recruit, educate and organise their peers.

Additionally, Young Members in Community need the active support and encouragement from all levels of our structures both for their own development as members and activists but also to enable effective succession-planning at branch, regional and national levels.

National, regional and branch Community structures need to work together with Young Members at all levels to develop an organising strategy fit for the current challenges.

That there are a wide range of opportunities available to address this membership decline and support the recruitment, organisation and development of our Young Members in Community.

We therefore call upon the Community Service Group Executive to:

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- a) Work with National Young Members to develop a Young Members Organising Strategy in Community which addresses our collective recruitment and organising challenges and highlights pay and conditions within our Service Group across all sectors.
- b) Work in collaboration with Young Members in Community to highlight the issues of young members pay and development across Community.
- c) Consider the development of mentoring, shadowing and other education and training programmes which empower Young Members in Community to make active contributions at all levels of our structures and within regional organising initiatives.
- d) Support Community branches to proactively engage with their Young Members and ensure that they are integral to formulating branch development plans and local organising strategies.
- e) Encourage Young Members in Community to actively participate at all levels of our structures through all appropriate media.

***North West Region***

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### **Negotiating and Bargaining**

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#### **2. Fire and re-hire: dismissal and re-engagement in Community**

Conference notes the introduction into Parliament of Employment and Trade Union Rights (Dismissal and Re-engagement) Bill by Barry Gardiner MP and backed by the Institute of Employment Rights which sought to amend the law relating to workplace information and consultation, employment protection and trade union rights in order to provide safeguards for workers against dismissal and their re-engagement on inferior terms and conditions which was blocked by the government at second reading in October 2021;

That in November 2021 the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) published guidance for employers considering making changes to employment contracts, making clear that fire and rehire should be an option of last resort and that employers should first have made all reasonable attempts to reach agreement through full consultation;

That in March 2022 the government announced its intention to develop a new Statutory Code of Practice, "which will clarify and give some legal force to government expectations that employers should behave fairly and reasonably when seeking to change employees' terms and conditions" and that "The code will act as a deterrent, particularly to those employers seeking to use the threat of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic." At the time of writing this code has not been brought forward.

Conference further notes the subsequent introduction of a private member's bill the Employment and Trade Union Rights (Dismissal and Re-engagement) Bill introduced by Lord Woodley (Labour) in the House of Lords in August 2022.

Conference shares the widespread concern at the BBC reports in July 2021 that companies involved in high-profile disputes about alleged 'fire and rehire' tactics

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included British Gas, P&O Ferries, Sainsbury's, Argos, British Airways, Weetabix, Jacob Douwe Egberts (JDE), and Tesco.

Conference is particularly concerned that use of these tactics extend much wider and encompass our own employers in Community.

In particular, Conference notes the case of registered charity St Monica Trust who against a backdrop of a national recruitment crisis in social care, in 2022, gave staff an ultimatum: sign new detrimental contracts effectively cutting their pay (with some employees losing more than £3,000 a year and also facing cuts to their sick pay and reductions in working hours) or face dismissal. At the time of writing this dispute had resulted in strike action.

Conference has previously highlighted many aspects of the crisis in social care and the use of 'fire and re-hire' tactics is just one response from unscrupulous employers who seek to make cost-savings at the expense of their key asset – their workers.

Conference believes there is a clear need for stronger enforcement mechanisms against exploitative employers who put share-holders or trustees interests first, whilst ruining the lives of their workers, and failing to remunerate them appropriately.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

a) Continue to work with the National Executive Council (NEC) and other Service Group Executives to highlight this pernicious practice and the effect it has on UNISON members including those in Community.

b) Support the call for stronger enforcement mechanisms and legislative change to ultimately outlaw Dismissal and Re-engagement.

***Community Service Group Executive***

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### **3. Sick pay in social care**

Conference last year resolved to campaign on sick pay, noting that many workers in our sectors receive only statutory sick pay. That means they receive hopelessly inadequate pay when sick, and nothing at all for the first three days of any sickness absence. Workers are forced to choose between going into work sick and feeding their families or doing the right thing by colleagues and service users, by staying away when not fit to work. The consequences, particularly where deadly infectious diseases such as Covid are in circulation, can be extremely serious.

Reaching workplace agreements on occupational sick pay can address this with individual employers. However, some employers replicate "the first three days unpaid" rule in their occupational schemes. This gives rise to all the same problems of working while sick which are inherent in the statutory sick pay regime. It can also increase the length of sickness absences, as workers will ensure they are absolutely back to full form before returning to work, in the knowledge that if they come back too soon and need to be absent again, there will again be three unpaid days before their sick pay kicks in.

Conference calls upon the Service Group executive to:

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1. Provide clear bargaining support information to reps and officers engaged in negotiations around sickness absence and sick pay.
2. Encourage reps and officers where UNISON is recognised for bargaining, to press for sick pay from day one where this is not now provided and resist any attempt to move backwards where this is already the case.
3. Campaign through all available means, including the Labour Link and other contacts with political parties for improved statutory sick pay provisions, and for local authorities and others to specify good standards of sick pay provision when commissioning services.

### ***National Major Charities Sector Committee***

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#### **4. Income: £99.30 a week – the reality of sick pay in social care**

Conference, it cannot be right, that employees within social care with increasing rent/mortgage payments, fuel, food and utilities, can be left when they fall ill on £100 a week.

This is totally unacceptable.

Everyone in this room will know someone working in the social care sector, that has fallen ill and has reached crisis point because of the lack of income.

We call on the Community Service Group Executive to;

1. continue to support branches and regions to build membership across the sector, with a focus on workplaces with low membership, and lack of UNISON organisation
2. continue to assist representatives with organising in their workplaces and putting into place negotiating forums
3. work with all regions and branches and give guidance and support to help representatives in negotiations on absence policies and rates of sick pay
4. call for a piece of work, reviewing and creating good practise guides for representatives when negotiation/creating absence policies.

### ***Gloucestershire Districts Health and Community***

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#### **5. Abolish Workers being charged for their DBS check**

This conference believes that we need to stop the regressive practice of some organisations in the Community and Voluntary sector charging their new employees to get their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) done.

In the midst of a cost of living crisis which is impacting the working of people the hardest, this conference motion contends that it is wrong for employers to charge their workers for something that is part of their role.

As the average hourly rate of a support worker is £10.50 and an enhanced DBS costs £38 this means that a new employee loses just under 4 hours of work they

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have done paying for their DBS (this does not include any admin cost that an employer can add on top of this).

This practice penalises low-paid workers that provide essential work in our society by caring for the most vulnerable and have done this throughout the pandemic putting their lives at risk.

Various charities both large and small charge their employees for their DBS check.

This conference therefore calls upon the Community Service Group Executive to;

1. Support the 'Abolish DBS charges for workers' campaign started by UNISON CVOB (Community & Voluntary Organisations Branch) which UNISON's Labour link are also campaigning on.
2. Lobby politicians at the national, devolved and local level about this campaign and ask them to take action on this issue.
3. Provide practical support to the campaign by helping to create campaign material and promote the petition to members and start a campaigns committee to help with planning the next stages.
4. Survey branches to find out which employers are charging for their DBS and to highlight this on social media and other channels.
5. Share the campaign's petition with all branches with community members and encourage them to share it with their members and for them to sign and promote it among members of UNISON.
6. Encourage branches with community members and regional community groups to get involved in the campaign by writing to their local elected representatives on this issue.

### *Community and Voluntary Organisations*

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#### **Campaigning**

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#### **6. Low pay in the Voluntary and community sector**

Conference notes: the report by the Living Wage Foundation published on 23rd June says low pay for charity staff is reinforcing inequality. One in seven voluntary sector workers earn less than the living wage and low pay in the sector is a "significant issue" that is reinforcing inequality.

The report says 14.1% of jobs in the UK voluntary sector are paid less than the living wage, compared with 17.1% across the overall economy.

Women are more likely to earn less than the living wage than men, the report says, and certain racialised groups also have above-average proportions of workers earning below living wage levels. Disabled staff are also more likely than non-disabled workers to be paid less than the living wage.

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16.6 per cent of women working in the sector earn less than the living wage compared with 10.3 per cent of men.

The report says 71.3% of all jobs that pay below the living wage are held by women, while slightly more than a quarter of part-time jobs are paid less than the living wage compared with 8.2% per cent of full-time roles.

It also says people who are Pakistani, Bangladeshi, black African, black Caribbean and black British are all in groups that have above-average proportions of workers earning below the living wage.

The report says below-living wage pay is “a significant issue in the third sector”.

It says: “While the sector dedicates a large amount of resources to the root causes of financial hardship, sections of the workforce are not paid a wage that allows them to meet essential living costs.

“This affects workers’ physical and mental health and whether they can remain in the sector.”

The sector also seems devoid of action to address the cost of living crisis.

Charities, alongside businesses and public sector organisations, have been guaranteed six months of support with energy costs as part of the government’s Energy Price Guarantee, which is scheduled to come into effect on October 1. There will then be a review in three months’ time to identify ‘vulnerable industries’ which will be eligible for further support after the six-month period ends.

The lack of reliable data on our sector available to policymakers is a significant risk to UNISON members in the CV sector. Earlier this year, the National VCSE Data and Insights Observatory was established by Nottingham Trent University to tackle data gaps affecting the social sector.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

- a) Continue to keep pay central to its national bargaining agenda by highlighting pay disparity across our nations/regions.
- b) Identify key pay and funding campaigning issues within the sector and take them forward.
- c) Highlight the effects of low pay in our sectors and the impact this is having on the recruitment and retention of women, young workers and workers with protected characteristics under the Equality Act.
- d) Work with UNISON Labour Link, the National Executive Council and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland to highlight the issues of sectoral pay and the impact this has on the survival of the charity sector, Community members and the services we provide.

***West Northamptonshire Local Government***

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### 7. Championing a real living wage for Community

Conference notes the publication of the “The All Work and Low Pay” report produced by the Living Wage Foundation in Summer 2022 which identified that one in seven charity workers are paid below the real living wage, a lower rate than across the economy as a whole, despite a higher proportion of charity sector workers being paid the real living wage than at any time in the past five years.

The report found the highest level of low pay in the sector is located in the North and Midlands with 19.4% of workers paid below the real living wage in the North West, 18.8% in the East Midlands, and 17.8% in the West Midlands and that 14.1% of jobs in the third sector pay below the real living wage, (which recommends that workers are paid £9.90 an hour across the UK or £11.05 in London).

Additional findings also included that certain ethnic groups, such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean and Black British groups are more likely to earn below the real living wage in the sector and of all low-paid jobs in the sector, 71.3% are held by women. Women are more likely to work in the sector, and more likely to be low-paid within it.

These findings illustrate what members in Community already know: that the pay differentials between our members and charity sector leaders is often large and that we need a real living wage too.

Conference welcomes the creation a new activist position called ‘pay campaign contact’ who will receive information of UNISON’s pay campaigns and distribute it locally to members and non-members.

This network of contacts will hopefully increase the visibility of these campaigns, as well as recruit and build workplace organisation around the issues, help to strengthen the union, get the vote out in future ballots or consultations, and maximise the organising and recruitment potential in UNISON’s pay campaigns.

Conference believes that this function can play a pivotal role in helping Community members understand the need to put pay at the centre of our organising, recruitment and retention agendas and that charity sector employers that can afford to do so should commit to pay a real Living Wage and for funders to provide enough to support real living wage jobs through their grant-making processes.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

- a) Continue to keep pay central to its national bargaining agenda by highlighting pay disparity across our nations/regions.
- b) Identify key pay and funding campaigning issues within the sector and take them forward.
- c) Highlight the effects of low pay in our sectors and the impact this is having on the recruitment and retention of women, young workers and workers with protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

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d) Work with Learning and Organising services to promote the role and function of pay campaign contacts throughout the Community Service Group.

e) Work with UNISON Labour Link, the National Executive Council and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland to highlight the issues of appropriate levels of funding, sectoral pay and the impact this has on the survival of the charity sector, Community members and the services we provide.

### *North West Region*

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#### **8. Social Care still on its knees!**

Conference notes the October 2022 data produced by Skills for Care on social care workers shows at least 165,000 vacancies across adult social care providers at the end of 2021-22.

This report identifies that staff vacancies in social care in England increased by a record 52% during that year, with 1 in 10 posts vacant and that care providers are facing a huge struggle to recruit staff and many people are consequently going to be without the care they need.

Conference further notes that New Health Foundation analysis in 2022 found that 1 in 5 residential care workers in the UK were living in poverty before the cost-of-living crisis, compared to 1 in 8 of all workers.

Conference believes that sustained underfunding and lack of meaningful reform by central government has contributed to unacceptable pay and conditions for people working in the sector, leaving care providers struggling to compete with other employers.

Conference knows that low pay and poor conditions contribute to severe financial hardship among UNISON members in social care within Community and across our service groups; and that only through sustained challenge, organising and campaigning can we achieve a fair deal for our social care members in Community.

Conference welcomes the work undertaken in the North West through its 10-year social care project which has sought to increase recognition for UNISON and secure (as a minimum) the Real Living Wage for care workers across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and its ongoing work to achieve the same objectives in the Liverpool City Region.

In particular, it recognises the outstanding work undertaken by Salford City branch and North West UNISON which resulted in the uplift of pay for all staff care workers across the Anchor Hanover estate resulting in a multi-million pound cost to the employer and increase in union membership.

Conference further believes that increasing pay in social care must be a political priority; that making it happen will require significant additional investment and action to ensure funding reaches staff; that a mix of policy options should be considered – such as introducing a sector-specific wage for social care – as part of a

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comprehensive plan for growing and supporting the care workforce; and that a fully funded plan for social care is now long overdue.

Conference further welcomes the work being undertaken in the North West, Cymru/Wales, South West and other nations/regions to place social care high on their organising agendas and to ensure that our legal and political efforts are combined with an effective organising strategy for social care which builds workplace organisation, membership and recognition across the sector.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

- a) Campaign for a social care system with co-design at its centre that is publicly delivered, free at the point of delivery and paid for by universal progressive taxation.
- b) Work with the National Executive Council and other stakeholder Service Groups to facilitate a national social care organising campaign which empowers workers in UNISON (and particularly in Community) to realise their collective strength.
- c) Work with relevant Service Groups, Labour Link and other stakeholders including by lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland to continue to highlight the gross under-funding of social care and the impact this has on our members in Community and other service groups.
- d) Continue to work with civil society partners and lobbying/campaigning organisations such as the Future Social Care Coalition to advance our mutual objectives of securing a fair settlement for social care workers and our communities and to ultimately win for Community members in social care.

### ***National Community and Voluntary Sector***

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#### **9. Charity Sector Pay**

Conference notes the publication of the Law Family Commission on Civil Society study, carried out by Pro Bono Economics in August 2022 entitled “The price of purpose? Pay gaps in the charity sector” which identifies that charity staff in the UK are paid 7% less per hour on average than workers in other sectors and that charity sector employees were collectively paid an estimated £1.5 billion less than their counterparts in other sectors in 2019.

Additionally recent Bank of England data showed that the cost of living crisis is causing the pay gap to grow – with average wages rising in the year to May 2022 by approximately 3.8% among charities, compared with 5.6% for businesses.

Conference is concerned that this growing pay gap threatens to weaken the sector and its impact at a time of increasing demand for charities’ services. With four in five charities already saying they are struggling to recruit at present, this systemic low pay is likely to exacerbate the problem by limiting the potential pool of workers, their diversity, and ultimately undervalues sector.

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Conference believes that the charity sector where our Community members work, are the life blood of a functioning democratic society and that our members deserve to be remunerated appropriately for their contribution and dedication.

Community members know first-hand how low pay can affect morale in the workforce, particularly during a cost of living crisis, and that this has the potential to drive people out of the sector at a time when demand for our charities' services is accelerating.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to:

a) Continue to keep pay central to its national bargaining agenda by highlighting pay disparity across our nations/regions.

b) Identify key pay and funding campaigning issues within the sector and take them forward.

c) Highlight the effects of low pay in our sectors and the impact this is having on the recruitment and retention of women, young workers and workers with protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

d) Work with UNISON Labour Link, the National Executive Council and other stakeholders including lobbying political parties in positions of power and influence in Scotland, Cymru/Wales and Northern Ireland to highlight the issues of sectoral pay and the impact this has on the survival of the charity sector, Community members and the services we provide.

### ***Community Service Group Executive***

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#### **10. Women in community jobs and the cost of living crisis**

Conference notes that more than 82,000 UNISON members work in the community and voluntary sector. Many of them are women and a significant number work in social care, where women outnumber men four to one.

Generally, women tend to have lower paid jobs and fewer hours than men. Also, there are three times as many women in part-time work as men. However, in the community and voluntary sector, the proportion of women compared to men in part-time work, almost by definition low-paid, is significantly higher.

Conference is very concerned that 71 percent of care workers who work in the independent sector are paid less than the real Living Wage.

Because it's women who are more likely to be in low paid jobs, they have been hit hard by the sharp rise in inflation and are disproportionately affected by spiralling living costs.

Women are usually the ones who manage household budgets especially in lower income households. Women tend to have the main responsibility for buying food and preparing it for children and families.

The cost of living crisis is affecting everyone but it's more often than not women who can't make their household budgets add up and women who have to make the

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choice between skipping meals or buying their children's school uniforms. It's women who end up leaving their jobs because childcare is so expensive.

Conference is also concerned that for some women, an already disproportionate impact, is likely to be even more serious. Conference notes that research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that poverty rates are significantly higher among Black people than white people. TUC research highlights that even prior to Covid-19, over a third of disabled workers were having to cut back on food and heating. Victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse, including economic abuse, largely women, are likely to find it harder to leave an abusive relationship if they are unsure how they will support themselves and their children as living costs rise.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to work with the National Women's Committee to action the following:

- 1) Work with the Labour Link to press the UK government to
  - a) tackle and resolve the issue of living cost crisis, highlighting the particularly harsh impact on low paid women workers and
  - b) provide long term policies that will include addressing food poverty and wastage.
- 2) Provide information and case studies about the impact of cost of living increases on lower paid women workers to help UNISON's negotiators bargain on behalf of this group.
- 3) Campaign for minimum pay rates of £15 an hour across the UK and to restore the £20 cut to universal credit.
- 4) Campaign for good quality, affordable childcare for all children, properly paid parental leave for all parents and all jobs to be flexible by default.
- 5) Support the 'right to a food justice campaign' which seeks to ensure the right to food in UK.
- 6) Work with the relevant NEC committees to try to improve the fundraising capacity of UNISON's There for you charity and continue to publicise to women the vital help available from There for you.

***National Women's Committee***

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### **11. Staffing Crisis in Social Care**

Conference notes with grave concern the on-going staffing crisis across the social care sector.

With social care organisations haemorrhaging staff and 165,000 vacancies remaining unfilled (skills for care Oct 2022), the companies providing these essential services are on their knees, and those on the front line are feeling it the most.

Looking at the current job adverts, it is clear to see that one of the main reasons for recruitment difficulties is the low pay. When you can work in your local supermarket

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for higher salary and significantly less responsibility than you can in the highly skilled workforce of social care, is it any wonder that we have a national staffing crisis on our hands.

Over many years, instead of paying staff a fair wage, employers have been happy to continue to fill the pockets of the nursing and care agencies, to plug gaps in the workforce. In recent months, these agencies have doubled their hourly rates, which has not been reflected by the commissioners.

It should not come to you as a surprise, that most large social care organisations, in England are running at millions of pounds of debt each year. This is unsustainable and subsequently we are facing an impending disaster.

Conferences therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to

1. continue to work with the labour link, NEC and other stake holders including lobbying political parties in a position of power and influence
2. continue to provide all support possible to groups of members in individual employers looking to improve their terms and conditions and pay levels
3. continue to build UNISON recognition across the whole sector
4. work towards the aim of a national regulated pay structure for social care.

### ***Gloucestershire Districts Health and Community***

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#### **12. Staying Alive: Pay and the survival of LGBT+ services**

Conference notes that "'Staying Alive': The Impact of 'Austerity Cuts' on the LGBT Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in England and Wales" a Trade Union Congress (TUC) - funded research report by Fiona Colgan et al at London Metropolitan University in 2014 was the last significant analysis of the state of the sector in relation to Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) specific organisations.

Since that time, a range of reports and analyses have outlined the significant impact that austerity has on the delivery of services across the Community and Voluntary Sector as a whole. This is now complicated and exacerbated by the overwhelming cost of living crisis that engulfs workers across our sector.

Conference further notes the 2022 Law Family Commission on Civil Society/Pro Bono Economics and Living Wage Foundation reports, both of which highlight how workers in the community sector are undervalued and underpaid and how this impacts the survival of the charity sector, the diversity of its employees and future delivery of services to marginalised communities.

Conference believes that many LGBT+ services and charities share a commonality of experience with Black, Disabled, Women-specific and Youth organisations. All of whom share a disproportionate impact as limited resources are apportioned within a sector which is experiencing an exponential call on our services as statutory provision is increasingly constrained. This in turn impacts our members pay and conditions.

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With charity staff paid 7% less per hour on average than workers in the rest of the economy this pay-lag limits the pool of potential staff and thus limits the diversity of that staff pool. At the same time, endemic low pay drives out existing staff which in turn, affects UNISON's ability to recruit and retain members who are representative of our diverse, intersectional communities.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive to work with the National Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender plus (NLGBT +) Committee:

1. To continue to highlight the effects of austerity and cost of living crisis have on the delivery of services to the LGBT+ community through all appropriate media.
2. To produce information and circulate existing guidance relating to the pay, terms and working conditions of LGBT+ Community members which are integral to the overall work on pay and bargaining in Community.
3. To build links with the Consortium of LGBT Voluntary and Community Organisations to identify the issues facing the sector and work together on initiatives of joint concern.
4. In any campaigning work, highlight the issues of sectoral pay and the impact this has on the survival of LGBT+ charities and on the terms and conditions of our LGBT+ members working in community.

### ***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus Committee***

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#### **Efficient and Effective Union**

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#### **13. Supporting regional development in Community**

Conference notes that it is a UNISON Rule Book commitment to establish Regional Community Service Group Committees under Rule D3.6. The criteria for representation being:

Branches with 100+ Community members are entitled to nominate 2 delegates to the committee (at least one of whom must be female).

Branches with 50-100 Community members are entitled to nominate 1 delegate and branches with less than 50 Community Service Group members are entitled to group with other branches to nominate a joint delegate.

Regional Self-Organised Group Committees are entitled to nominate 1 delegate who must be a member of the Community Service Group.

Conference further notes that this formal structure is not consistent throughout UNISON's nations/regions for a number of factors including levels of engagement, development and other regional Community structures such as region-wide geographical Community branches.

Conference believes that it is a primary function of the Service Group Executive to both share good practice and assist in the development of regional structures which enable Community members to determine their own strategic priorities and formally

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input into the decision making processes and organising agendas of their respective regions.

Conference therefore calls on the Community Service Group Executive:

- a) To share good practice with regions on the various types of regional structure that exist.
- b) To work with regions to facilitate the most effective forms of regional forum which ensures branch engagement and representation from branches with Community members.
- c) To develop strategies to support the development of Regional Community Service Group structures which are appropriately funded and resourced.

### ***Community Service Group Executive***

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#### **14. Securing the legacy of the year of disabled workers in Community workplaces**

Conference notes the success of UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers 2022. Although the year is not yet complete, we have seen renewed focus on the experience of disabled members in our union, in the workplace and in society, including those in the Community service group.

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

Conference notes the letter sent to all service groups by General Secretary Christina McAnea which called on the Community service group to get fully behind the initiative, including by making the year of disabled workers a standing item on service group executive agendas and encouraging regions and branches to do likewise.

Christina also called for the following actions from the Community service group:

1. Encourage all Community branches to elect a disabled members officer or contact and register them for national training.
2. Support branches to negotiate with their employer to agree reasonable adjustment passport and disability leave policies, based on UNISON's bargaining guides, and raise these at a national bargaining level where appropriate.
3. Work with and support regional and branch disabled members groups.

Conference welcomes the work that the Community Service Group has undertaken over the year including running a webinar on negotiating reasonable adjustment and disability leave agreements with Community employers.

Conference acknowledges that tackling systemic and ingrained discrimination against disabled workers will take more than one year and we need to use the

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success of the year of disabled workers to continue our work and secure a lasting legacy for our members working in Community.

Conference therefore resolves to ask the service group executive to work with the national disabled members committee to:

- A) Carry out an audit of Community branches to assess:
  - i. where there is no agreed reasonable adjustment passport or policy
  - ii. where there is no agreed paid disability leave policy
  - iii. where there is no elected disabled members officer
- B) Implement a disability equality bargaining strategy to address these policy gaps using UNISON's two bargaining guides (Disability Leave guide and Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Passport guide) to negotiate locally
- C) Publicise UNISON's now regular online Disabled Members Officers and Contacts training to Community branches and consider setting a target for the number attending each year
- D) Circulate UNISON's new stewards guide to representing disabled members and our guide to representing deaf (British Sign Language users) members to activists in Community workplaces.

### ***National Disabled Members Committee***

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#### **Motions Ruled Out of Order**

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Beyond remit of the Conference

#### **Motion Removal of Sick Pay from Day 1**

The Sheffield Community Health Branch notes that there is a recognition of the aging nature of the social care work force as highlighted in UNISON's and various other organisation's submissions to Parliament this year. This combined with very low pay and the runaway cost-of-living increases due to the economic crisis, is having an increasing impact on the health of our members.

Covid absences are now being classed as normal sickness absence, which when combined with unpaid sick leave and very low pay, equates to guaranteeing a significant number of staff coming into work sick and bringing Covid into vulnerable people's homes and residences. This puts our members, their families and others at unnecessary risk. Tragically, this is likely to be on an industrial scale, so it needs addressing as a matter of urgency to reduce fatalities, serious illness and staff leaving the sector.

We therefore note that it is no longer appropriate for UNISON to support agreements with employers to stop paying sickness absence against the above backdrop, not least as it also undermines the union's credibility when lobbying for change, as it could be seen to be actively breaching duty of care to its own members, losing the moral high ground.

## 2023 National Community Conference and Seminar UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

Our aging work force increasingly need paid sickness absence due to their declining health and reduced healthcare, but the trend in organisations like Dimensions UK and other community voluntary sector employers is to cut back on paid sick leave. The demographic of the UK highlights an aging population, that has to deal with additional health impacts from Covid, a weakened NHS after the pandemic and years of Tory government, and a rapidly declining economy. The practical reality is, that it is not rational to unnecessarily erode the health of our weakening work force, as we know one of the biggest economic challenges the UK now faces is a lack of workers. Weakening the health of the remaining experienced workers in social care is simply making a bad situation even worse.

1. Therefore, conference informs the National Executive Council (NEC) that it is no longer appropriate for UNISON to continue to support stopping sick pay across the social care sector, but instead calls for the NEC to campaign vigorously to highlight the negative impacts of unpaid sick absence on the work force by encouraging employers to work in partnership to design equitable sickness policies to support staff in the social care sector with sick pay which will support retention of staff, knowledge and skills those staff bring
2. To encourage the use of Equality Impact Assessments in policies to support the ageing workforce to reduce inequalities and discrimination of the older workforce.

*Sheffield Comm Hlth Unison*

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Beyond the remit of the Committee

### **Motion Northern Ireland Strategic Community and Voluntary Sector Forum**

UNISON North of Ireland (NI) Community and Voluntary Sector members through their jobs strive to raise the living standards and aspirations of the people, finding themselves in positions of influence, providing hope and building resilience across working class and other marginalised communities.

UNISON Community members in NI provide a pivotal function in challenging inequality and injustice and a bridge between the organisations we work for, the communities we serve and are members of.

Our working lives are spent implementing and developing programmes for real change, stabilising our communities, and significantly reducing pressure on already stretched public services.

Yet Community and Voluntary Sector workers in the North of Ireland currently operate within a system which places minimal value on them as individuals and even less value on the work they complete.

This is our reality: it is both unacceptable and unsustainable.

Conference believes:

That we have a duty to address the increasingly negative working environments and diminishing living standards which Community members in NI experience.

## **2023 National Community Conference and Seminar UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

That public expenditure within the Community Sector in NI must have proper scrutiny with built in accountability frameworks as standard and not an aspiration.

That we should be working towards building in social clauses in all NI Community and Voluntary Sector funding streams to bring an end to the precarious and unstable nature of Community members' jobs.

Conference further believes:

That a constructive response to this is to develop mechanisms which facilitate inter-union and decision-maker dialogue and which can make a material difference to how UNISON Community Members are both perceived and remunerated for their outstanding contribution to addressing the needs of our communities.

That the establishment of a Forum which could bring senior lay trade union representatives together with senior personnel from the NI Department for Communities, Department of Health and other bodies with political power and decision-making influence to discuss issues associated with the funding, development and future direction of the Community and Voluntary Sector in NI is long overdue.

That there is a need for an appropriate platform to raise issues and seek actions around such things as inequalities in salaries, excessive CEO pay, poverty pay, sub-standard contracts of employment and detrimental organisational policies and procedures.

Conference therefore calls upon the Community Service Group Executive to work with the NI Community and Voluntary Sector Branch to:

- a) Highlight the pay, terms and conditions and significant impact NI UNISON Community members make on the communities we serve through all appropriate media.
- b) Initiate dialogue with UNISON NI Regional Council to explore the potential for the development of a Strategic Community and Voluntary Sector Forum which could facilitate discussions between UNISON (and other trade unions) branch lay activists, funding bodies, relevant government departments and elected representatives.
- c) Establish an ad hoc working group which could examine the issues contained in this motion and report back to 2024 Community Conference.

### ***Community and Voluntary Sector Branch NI***

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Could place the union in legal jeopardy

#### **Motion Impact of the rent cap in England**

Not printed on the advice of the legal officer

### ***National Housing Association Sector Committee***

#### **Motion Equality for Trans Community members is UNISON business!**

Not printed on the advice of the legal officer

## 2023 National Community Conference and Seminar UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

### *National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus Committee*

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In breach of Rule D.2.11 Employment of Staff

#### **Motion Cost of living and low paid Black workers in the community sector**

Conference notes that more than 82,000 UNISON members work in the community and voluntary sector. Many of them are women and/or Black and a significant number work in social care.

The care sector is occupationally segregated, with a high proportion of women and people identifying as Black, Asian or minority ethnic. They are overrepresented in lower paid, insecure jobs. These inequalities are compounded by the racial discrimination experienced by Black workers.

Conference is very concerned that 71 percent of care workers who work in the independent sector are paid less than the real Living Wage.

Conference notes recent research commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found that ethnic minority staff in the independent care sector were more likely than white peers to be on zero-hours contracts.

Everyone is facing a cost-of-living crisis because of the rise in household energy bills and increasing costs of food and household goods. Grocery price inflation set a record high in October 2022 at 14.7%. However, because Black workers are disproportionately represented in low-paid, insecure jobs, many of them in the community sector in care jobs, they are also disproportionately impacted by the cost of living crisis.

The annual London Poverty Profile, published 28 July 2022 by Trust for London, revealed 27 percent of households in the capital are living in poverty. For Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, the proportion of people living in poverty is far higher at 39 per cent almost 4 in 10.

Conference calls on the Community Service Group Executive to work with the NEC and relevant sub-committees:

1. To explore a dedicated help-line for Black members in difficulty as a consequence of the cost of living crisis as part of UNISON's There for You charity.
2. To highlight to the UK government how the impact of the escalating cost of living is disproportionately affecting Black Workers.

***National Black Members' Committee***