

**NATIONAL RETIRED  
MEMBERS'  
CONFERENCE 2023**

**PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

## **AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS ADMITTED TO THE AGENDA**

ASO1	Amendment to SO	Islington
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## **MOTIONS ADMITTED TO THE AGENDA**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Submitting Body</b>
1	UNISON retired members just want to have funds!	Hampshire
2	Public Ownership of Energy Utilities	North West Region
3	Renationalise Royal Mail	North West Region
4	Stop Rise in State Pension Age	Birmingham
5	Support Campaign for Pain-free Hysteroscopies	Birmingham
6	Maximising Support for Retired Members	South West Region
7	Scrap Tax on Pension withdrawals	South West Region
8	Parking Problems for Pensioners	South West Region
9	GP and Pharmacy Services	Eastern Region
10	Bank Branch Closures	Eastern Region
11	Year of Black Workers	West Midlands Region
12	Declining Bus Services and Impact on Pensioners	NRMC
13	Housing Older people and the CoL crisis	NRMC
14	New vs Old State Pension	NRMC
15	Transport by Train	NRMC

16	State Retirement and Triple Lock	West Midlands Community Branch
17	Dirty Money	Yorkshire & Humberside Region
18	Britain's railway ticket offices - closures	Yorkshire & Humberside Region
19	Justice for the Windrush generation	Islington
20	Time for a Quadruple Lock	Islington
21	Tackling Pensioner Poverty	Northern Ireland Region
22	National Regional and Local Transport	Wakefield LG
23	Amendment to Rule Option 1	Islington
24	Let's Make Care Work	Greater London

## **AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

### **Conflicts with an existing rule**

	Amendment to SO 3.1	Scotland Region
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## **MOTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

### **Beyond Remit of Conference:**

	Democracy denied?	Hampshire
	Social Care Crisis – For a National Care Service	Camden
	Communicating with Retired members	North West Region

	Support the Ethical Care Charter	North West Region
	Social Care Crisis – For a National Care Service	Camden
	Living Pension	Eastern Region
	Voter ID	Eastern Region
	Pensioner Poverty - Rise in Excess Deaths	NRMC
	Retired Members an underused resource	Scotland Region
	Climate Emergency	Scotland Region
	A living pension with dignity	Scotland Further Education
	AI – Blessing or Danger?	Hampshire

**Could place the union in legal jeopardy (not printed)**

	An indulgence for NDC SOC	Islington
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# PRELIMINARY AGENDA

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## Amendment to Standing Orders

ASO01

### AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

In Standing Order number 8, motions and amendments insert a new section \*.1 to read as follows:

“8.1 Motions and amendments may be submitted to Conference by the following bodies:

- Branch Retired Members’ groups
- Regional Retired Members’ groups
- National Retired members’ Committee
- Retired Members’ Women’s’ caucus
- Retired Members’ Black Members’ caucus
- Retired Members’ Disabled Members’ caucus
- Retired Members’ Lesbian, Gay, bisexual and Transgender Plus (LGBT+) caucus

Caucus motions and amendments shall only be on matters primarily affecting the members of that particular caucus.”

and renumber subsequent paragraphs accordingly.

Islington Local Government Retired Members Group

*Islington UNISON (M)*

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## Motions

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### Motion 01

#### UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUNDS!

Yes, we acknowledge that some pensioners are millionaires and, yes, we acknowledge that some Government Ministers are millionaires or multi-millionaires. Whereas some pensioners, including our UNISON retired members, are living in abject poverty, we have yet to find one Minister living in abject poverty. When your life is full of luxury, it may be difficult to understand that there are those who cannot afford to keep warm or eat.

The Government pledge to honour the triple lock when raising the state pension meant that in April 2023 the increase was raised by the inflation level of 10.1%. Unfortunately, for some retired members on lower incomes this increase has meant that they now have to pay tax. The amount of income which retired members need has increased substantially during the last year due to the rising cost of living, food prices and energy costs increasing. Sadly, the amount of income that they can keep before being taxed has not changed.

Conference therefore instructs the UNISON National Retired Members Committee and calls on the National Executive Council to:

1. urgently campaign on making the Government aware of this situation;
2. report progress on a regular basis in UNISON publications and at all the UNISON National Retired Members Committee meetings for onward circulation to Regions and Branches;
3. report back to the 2024 UNISON National Retired Members Conference any progress achieved in increasing awareness.

*Hampshire (L)*

## PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF ENERGY UTILITIES

Conference believes:

1. Retired members have been particularly hard hit by the cost-of-living crisis and in particular the massive increases in energy bills since April 2021 that has hit millions of people.
2. Retired members who are at home during the day have faced the impossible juggling act of trying to keep themselves warm and still have enough money for other day to day living costs.
3. It has been especially galling to face such massive increases in heating costs at the same time as watching the top five energy companies pay over \$130 billion in dividends to shareholders in 2022.
4. Not only has the privatised UK energy industry been a disaster for retired members, the so-called “competitive market” has meant the excellent opportunity to replace harmful carbon-based generating ability with clean renewable energy has been squandered. Obtuse rules imposed to try and create the impression of an energy market has meant any benefits of the cheap renewable energy which has been rolled out has failed to be translated into cheap prices for customers.
5. The massive opposition to high energy prices and the overwhelming popular support for public ownership of utilities is a vindication of the position our union has consistently adopted of support for public ownership of utilities.
6. As we approach a 2024 General Election it is essential that we win a commitment that the next government will end this disastrous experiment of privatised energy and instead bring this essential public service back into public ownership.
7. The research already commissioned by UNISON says the benefits which a publicly owned Energy industry would bring in terms of:
  - I. Tackling the gross underinvestment in new generation capacity and infrastructure. A nationally co-ordinated plan can drive the move to clean energy without the need to bribe private industry.
  - II. Introducing measures to tackle and eliminate the scandal of fuel poverty.
  - III. Ending the drive for profit which leads to excessive bonuses for senior executives, attacks on the employment contracts of ordinary employees and an ever-increasing cost to the consumer.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the NEC, Labour Link, and other relevant organisations:

- a. To use appropriate resources and channels to support the promotion of the policy of bringing the Energy Industry back into public ownership with the aim that the next government has this as one of its key commitments.
- b. Use current and supporting information and research in support of this aim.

*North West Region*

### **Motion 03**

#### RENATIONALISE THE ROYAL MAIL

The Royal Mail has a long and proud history. It was founded in the Tudor period in 1516 when Henry VIII established a “Master of the Posts”.

The Uniform Penny Post was established in 1840 and effectively the system continued to operate successfully until, 2013 when the decision was taken to privatise the Royal Mail and float it on the stock exchange.

The situation has deteriorated recently with Royal Mail failing to meet its delivery targets. The problem occurs because of a combination of factors, including competition from other companies. However, one area where the Royal Mail clearly has a great difficulty compared with its competitors is in the requirement for it to provide a universal delivery service for a standard fee from wherever to wherever in the United Kingdom. Since the development of electronic means of communication the use of the postal service has been falling steadily.

This clearly gives a great incentive for Royal Mail to seek to reduce or even try to obtain permission to withdraw the letter service.

A major use of letter post is by older people, many of whom do not use electronic means of communication. It is also the case that many hospital appointments and government communications are via the letter system, which would disproportionately disadvantage older people.

Retired Members are particularly reliant on the postal services and are concerned at the recent direction of these services

Conference calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the NEC, Labour Link, and other relevant organisations:



1. To use appropriate resources and channels to support the promotion of the policy of bringing the Royal Mail back into public ownership with the aim that the next government has this as one of its key commitments.

2. Use current and supporting information and research in support of this aim.

*North West Region*

## **Motion 04**

### **STOP RISE IN STATE PENSION AGE**

Conference notes the widespread opposition to the plan by President Macron to increase the State Retirement Age in France from 62 to 64 may well have been a factor in the decision by the UK Government to delay making a decision on the rise in the State Pension Age to 68, with reports that ministers were considering bringing forward this increase to 2035, affecting people who are 54 and under today. Conference further notes that successive government increases in the UK State Pension Age has left women born on or after April 6th 1950 -April 5th 1960 significantly worse off.

Conference believes that it is the expectation that as we come to the end of our working lives we can look forward to a new and reinvigorated life through our retirement years, as a fundamental bedrock of a society that is committed to looking after its young and older workers and those who have already retired. State Retirement Age is an Intergenerational issue.

Successive governments, in planning for an increase in the state pension age to 68, have argued that the increase is justified because of the improvement in life expectancy for at least 30 years. As the TUC, in their submission to the Second State Pension Review, point out “the significant slowdown in longevity makes it impossible to continue with the timetable for increasing the state pension age to 68” adding “There are also wide and growing differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas and many people in low paying and manually intensive jobs are already facing difficulties working until State Retirement Age.”

Conference calls upon the UNISON National Retired Members Committee to

1. Fully support the National Pensioners Convention campaign “68 is Too Late”.
2. Fully support the TUC demand that the government do not implement the planned increase in the State Retirement Age to 67 between 2026/27.
3. Campaign for future decisions by this or any incoming government on the State Pension Age in the UK to be based on recommendations by an independent

Pensions Commission including representatives from trade unions and pensioners' organisations such as AGE UK and the National Pensioners Convention.

4. Support the WASPI campaign for an immediate one-off compensation payment to those women affected by increases in the UK State Pension Age, with the most going to women who were given the shortest notice of the longest increase in their state pension age.

*Birmingham UNISON Branch*

## **Motion 05**

### **SUPPORT CAMPAIGN FOR PAIN-FREE HYSTEROSCOPIES**

This conference notes the campaign by the Campaign Against Painful Hysterectomy (CAPH) to end the barbaric practice Hysterectomies being carried out in the NHS with inadequate or no offer of pain relief.

As the CAPH point out, unlike NHS Colonoscopy or Gastroscopy procedures, women undergoing Hysterectomy are NOT offered a safely monitored conscious sedation. The NHS procedure is performed in Outpatients whilst the patient is awake – women with a closed or narrowed cervix (i.e. post-menopausal women and those having gone through a non-vaginal childbirth) are not informed that the procedure can be excruciatingly painful: patients are instructed to take over-the-counter medicines before the procedure, no stronger medication is recommended and only seldom given. There is no separate appointment for a pre-operative assessment.

Conference notes that the British Association of Anaesthetists have recorded that between 2019 – 2020, 71,000 Hysterectomies were carried out on the NHS, disproportionately affecting older women who are more prone to needing internal examination due to age.

Conference is concerned that NHS Hospital Trusts are currently financially incentivised through the Best Practice Tariff to perform at least 70% of Hysterectomies in Outpatients rather than under general anaesthetic. This means that patients are not always given a CHOICE between an outpatient hysterectomy and a general anaesthetic.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention, Scottish Pensioners Forum, Age UK and other relevant and appropriate organisations to mount a campaign, and work with the Women's Self-Organised Group and UNISON branches to promote that campaign, to urge that:

1. All NHS Hysterectomists have advanced training in pain medicine.

2. All Hysteroscopy patients receive full written information before the procedure, listing the risks and benefits of a local anaesthetic, so that they can make a personal choice.

3. All Hysteroscopy services are adequately funded so that BEFORE their procedures patients may choose no anaesthesia/ local anaesthesia/ safely monitored conscious sedation/ epidural/ general anaesthetic.

4. The 'Best Practice Tariff financial incentive', which rewards NHS Trusts who perform a high percentage of hysteroscopies in outpatients without a trained anaesthetist is abolished.

*Birmingham UNISON Branch*

## **Motion 06**

### **MAXIMISING THE SUPPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS**

Conference notes that, as well as campaigning on issues that relate directly to retired members, we have the potential and a responsibility to support the campaigns of working members. This is not new but is now more important than ever in the current period of intense struggle against a government and employers who are intent on destroying the livelihood, rights and voice of working people.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to work with the National Executive Committee, regions and branches to:

1. ensure that retired members are encouraged and enabled to give maximum support to working members, and
2. identify and remove any unnecessary barriers to their doing so.

*South West Region*

## **Motion 07**

### **SCRAP TAX ON PENSION WITHDRAWALS FOR CARE PURPOSES**

Conference notes that proposals to limit the erosion of personal estates to pay for care in older age has never progressed as hoped, leaving many with little to pass on to their next of kin.

But this hostile backdrop to managing declining years does not stop there. For those with the means to tap into their pension pot to pay for care costs, a heavy tax burden awaits!

Currently, the first 25% of a Defined Contribution (money purchase) pension pot withdrawal is tax free. The other 75% is taxable at the same rate as income tax so, current tax rules discourage savers from using pensions to fund care. This situation might instead bring forward taking out an equity release product or where capital assets are over £23,250 the forced sale of the house to pay for care costs.

What form could the remedy take that would securely ringfence care funding? An INA (Immediate Needs Annuity) is an insurance product that can be bought by self-funders who are set to receive long term care. In exchange for a lump sum payment, such as deriving from a cashed in pension, to an insurance company, the buyer is guaranteed to receive regular payments for the care that they need, for the rest of their life. However, if someone dies soon after taking out the plan the money that they invested in the INA will be lost, but it may have avoided the forced sale of their dwelling.

Pension pots could provide assistance to people to give them the care they need in later life, prolong their independence and delay any prospective transition to residential care.

If people could access their pension pots tax free - to pay for care, this could both promote higher levels of retirement saving and make it easier for people to pay for their own care if they need it. Moreover, this should also reduce the likelihood of people needing means-tested support from the state.'

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention, Age UK and other relevant organisations; and encourage local UNISON branches, regions and Trades Union Councils to call on HM Treasury to scrap tax on pension withdrawals where the funds are to be used for care related purposes.

*South West Region*

## **Motion 08**

### **PARKING PROBLEMS FOR PENSIONERS**

This conference deplores the increasing use of cashless parking machines in public car parks, at on-street parking meters, at shopping centres and other facilities which discriminate against pensioners.

Payments to these machines can only be made by using a variety of different methods including debit or credit cards, contactless cards, smart phone payments and payments by apps. This is allegedly to prevent vandalism and theft as well as being environmentally more friendly.

They are not friendly for many retired people who do not have the technology such as smart phones and do not understand how to use these parking machines, many of which vary greatly depending on the provider. A large number of pensioners still rely on the use of cash and some do not have bank accounts or credit cards.

These machines allegedly make payments easier and faster, but not for those who are older and infirm who suffer from a variety of illnesses associated with ageing including loss of mobility and poor sight.

The impact of these is that many pensioners are unable to go shopping, visit town centres, attend doctor and hospital appointments or socialise. It is at the very least inconvenient but at worst ageist and discriminatory and contributes to greater isolation and loneliness.

Set this against the companies who provide these so-called services on behalf of local authorities, hospitals and other amenities who make vast profits at our expense.

Some members have said they are afraid to park where they are unable to use cash and others have incurred substantial fines.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention, Scottish Pensioners Forum, Age UK, the Trades Union Congress, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and other relevant organisations; and encourage local UNISON branches, regions and Trades Union Councils to:

1. Mount a campaign for the retention of cash payment machines in all car parks used by the public and reinstate such machines where they have been removed.
2. Raise awareness with government and local authorities of the difficulties encountered by pensioners in using these machines.

*South West Region*

## **Motion 09**

### **GP AND PHARMACY SERVICES**

Conference notes with concern the Government's pressure for people to consult pharmacists in the first instance rather than their GP surgery. This is the result of its continuing underfunding of the NHS and, in particular, general practice surgeries, with a large deficit of fully trained GPs. This is at a time when pharmacies across all four nations are either closing due to the pressures of the cost of living crisis, or moving into large supermarkets where there is not always space for a separate consulting room. This is currently happening within NHS England but may well become an adopted practice within the other nations of the UK.

Whilst Conference recognises the ability and help pharmacists can offer, this inevitably can only be at a certain level and is no substitute for proper medical appointments. When people cannot get to see their GP and are not confident with advice given by pharmacists, this will only lead to greater pressure on A&E Departments, the very thing Government says it is trying to avoid by promoting pharmacist appointments.

This is especially concerning for older people who are more likely to have complex medical needs, as they may be offered incorrect or insufficient advice from pharmacists especially as they do not have access to all a person's medical records unlike GPs.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to:

1. work with the NPC and TUC Pensioner organisations to lobby the Government to properly fund GP surgeries and pharmacy services.
2. alert those in Scotland, Wales and N Ireland to this development and to organise with relevant Older People Organisations to resist it
3. encourage regions and branches to work locally with relevant organisations to resist this development and campaign for GP services to be much more available to all.

*Eastern Region*

## **Motion 10**

### **BANK BRANCH CLOSURES**

Conference notes with increasing concern the continuing process of bank branch closures. In addition, Conference notes that there are increasing numbers of Post Office closures throughout the UK causing hardship to affected communities.

For older people, this is a disaster. It is not just the lack of access to accounts and the availability of cash that is of concern. It is also the fact that many bank transactions which involve, for example the death of a partner, executor duties or work concerning some aspects of Power of Attorney cannot be done "online" or by telephone but must be done within a branch. These duties are much more likely to be carried out by older people who are increasingly being penalised in this work either by lack of "online" skills or simply by the inability to access bank branches.

Conference takes the view that government intervention is required to create a regulatory framework for banks which requires them to offer the full range of banking services within a network of branches that provides easy access, particularly to older people who are constrained either by lack of online skills or poor transport networks. We are aware that in parts of the 4 Nations banking hubs are being set up but if this is to be the way forward they need to be much more widely available.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members Committee

1. to work within the NPC and TUC Pensioner organisations within the 4 nations of the UK to work up a detailed regulatory proposal to bring to government and all opposition parties in the UK Parliament and to governing and opposition parties in the devolved nations
2. to consult with regions and branches on any proposals to ensure a united position within UNISON
3. Once a proposal has been agreed, set up a regional and branch campaign strategy to ensure that all parliamentary representatives in all parliaments of the UK are aware of and, so far as is possible, support the campaign
4. to seek to ensure, through regions and branches, that local support from Local Authorities and organisations representing older people for such a campaign is achieved
5. to campaign directly to the UK government for an end to Post Office branch closures.

*Eastern Region*

## **Motion 11**

### **YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS – SECURING ITS LEGACY IN THE RETIRED**

#### **MEMBERS' ORGANISATION**

Conference notes that 2023 has been the Year of Black Workers and its focus has been 'Establishing legacy to generate change'. This year is not, itself, the change we seek. It is the opportunity to generate change.

Black workers often find themselves in low-paid, insecure work with poor terms and conditions. Besides immediate effects, this has consequences in old age. The ethnicity pension gap is the cumulative effect of a lifetime of discrimination in employment. Pensioner poverty is disproportionately concentrated among Black pensioners. Despite the Westminster government denying that institutional racism exists in our society, we know it does.

With UNISON having an estimated 185,000 Black members, there are likely to be at least 20,000 retired Black members. It is imperative that we build upon our long history of achievements in tackling inequities in our society by taking concrete action to enable Black members, including retired Black members, to take the next step in our journey towards justice.

UNISON is far more than just another trade union; UNISON is an organisation that seeks to improve the lives of its members and wider society by challenging the status quo and seeking to generate change. With this being so, conference calls upon the Retired Members' National Committee to:

1. Work with the National Black Members' Committee and other Self-Organised Groups to understand the number of Black members in the Retired Members' Organisation and work to encourage those who do not have their ethnicity recorded in their membership data to update this;
2. Work with the National Black Members' Committee and other Self-Organised Groups to analyse and interpret the data captured from point (1) and to create and implement a strategic plan to work towards ensuring that Black members are represented proportionately within the structures of the Retired Members' Organisation at branch, regional and national level;
3. Work with the National Black Members' Committee to review the Retired Members' Organisation's current arrangements to identify and take up equality issues, challenge discrimination, seek to ensure that its structures reflect its whole membership and to develop an action plan to support Black members to become active within the Retired Members' Organisation;
4. Work with the National Black Members' Committee to capture ethnicity pension gap data and to develop a strategy to reduce and eradicate it; and,
5. Work with the National Black Members' Committee and UNISON's Learning and Organising Service to develop a training and development plan to ensure all activists in the Retired Members' Organisation receive training in 'Defining Black' and other relevant UNISON race equality training.

By taking these steps, conference believes, the Retired Members' Organisation will contribute to UNISON working towards its mission to 'establish legacy to generate change'. Doing so will also help the Retired Members' Organisation to meet the needs of UNISON's retired Black members and improve our ability to lead the way towards the more equitable and just society we all want, need and deserve.

*West Midlands Region*

## **Motion 12**

### **DECLINING BUS SERVICES AND IMPACT ON PENSIONERS**

This conference deplores the continuing decline in local bus services throughout the UK. Not only have services been substantially cut but those services that have been retained are often unreliable, unpredictable and infrequent.



Buses are an essential part of the local, regional and national economies, playing a vital role in the transport system, especially for pensioners who rely on journeys by bus for shopping, going to the library, having access to the bank and post office, seeing the doctor, dentist or pharmacist, meeting friends and socialising. Reduced bus services have led to greater loneliness, isolation and a deterioration in mental and physical health of pensioners unable to access the vital services they need. This doesn't just affect pensioners, but also many essential staff in the NHS and Care Sectors who are unable to get to work because of bus service cuts.

The Tory Government made false promises to improve transport connectivity, which has not happened. The Tories promised to "level up across the country" with "beautiful, British-built buses that are cleaner, greener, quieter, safer and more frequent". The Tories 'Bus Back Better' strategy for England hasn't worked. The Campaign for Better Transport has concluded that 23 per cent of bus services in England, amounting to 2,800 services, have in fact been cut since its launch in 2021.

The fault began with the Thatcher Government's Transport Act 1985 which deregulated local bus services throughout Great Britain outside of London. Margaret Thatcher predicted that privatising bus transport would result in lower fares, new services, and more passengers, while removing any potential future liability on the taxpayer.

Deregulation has not improved services but made travel by bus even more difficult and at greater cost to the economy and the environment by increasing journeys by car and taxi. Fares have risen by more than any measure of inflation, services are fewer, and many bus companies are owned by distant conglomerates.

Retired members living in rural areas and small villages in the countryside were first to be hardest hit by reduced bus services, yet today even in towns and cities there have been significant cuts to routes. Due in part to insufficient trained drivers to maintain timetables because of low wages, long hours and poor working conditions. Lack of affordable accommodation in towns and bigger cities has caused drivers to live further away from depots, leading to longer working days, more health problems and less value from their earnings. This has led to an exodus of drivers to substantially better paid work driving lorries and other HGV transport. Furthermore, many bus operators call on local government subsidies to make any profit. Yet Government austerity policies introduced in 2010 have cut local government funding which started the massive decline in bus services. For 2023, the biggest bus support cuts have been from County authorities in Kent and Hertfordshire.

Conference notes with concern that in an ageing population the bus transport system is remains broken and cannot meet the needs of our retired members.

Conference also notes that in the Republic of Ireland, our neighbours have proposed a programme of bus improvements to deliver to at least 70% of the population a minimum service of three bus round trips daily.

It therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention,

Scottish Pensioners Forum, Age UK, the Trades Union Congress, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and other relevant organisations to:

1. Campaign for a substantial increase in central government funding to local authorities to reverse the decline in bus services and enable bus operators to pay higher wages, improve working conditions and reduce fares.
2. Campaign to bring bus services back into municipal ownership.
3. Demand a bus service that meets the needs of pensioners and provides a cleaner environment. Encouraging older people to use buses.
4. Call upon UNISON branches and regions to support the national campaign It further urges them to mount local campaigns to achieve greater awareness of the impact of declining bus services on their own community.
5. Campaign for better bus services and encourage retired members in branches and regions to take part in campaigns to get pensioners back using bus services.

*National Retired Members' Committee*

## **Motion 13**

### **HOUSING, OLDER PEOPLE AND THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS**

There are almost 11 million people aged 65 and over in the UK which represents nearly 20% of the total population. Yet the government continues to ignore the plight of many pensioners and to place the interests of developers and the private sector housing providers before the housing needs of older people. Many pensioners facing debt because of mortgages and rents that have doubled combined with high energy costs.

The situation for pensioners in the rented sector is bleak with a severe lack of social housing available to rent and private landlords selling-up because of increased mortgage rates or charging higher rents in many cases for substandard and poorly maintained buildings. These are a health hazard resulting in additional and unnecessary costs to the NHS from cold related illnesses and falls. Right to buy has substantially reduced the availability of social housing and will continue to do so in the future.

There are fewer specialist sheltered / supported homes available, existing housing stock is poorly insulated and fails to meet the needs of an ageing population. Many pensioners face poverty, insecurity and an uncertain future in sub-standard private rented accommodation.

Current research suggests that increasingly older people are stepping off the property ladder and choosing to rent in the hope that it will give greater flexibility.

For others there is no choice and the range of property types together with the quality and standard of accommodation is likely to be limited depending on financial circumstances. Many pensioners who are “house rich, cash poor” have needed to free up their assets in the cost-of-living crisis to cover living costs. Others have never been able to afford to buy a home.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention, Scottish Pensioners Forum, Age UK, the Trades Union Congress, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and other relevant organisations to:

1. Mount a campaign to urge local authorities, housing associations and the Government to make a genuine commitment to building more accessible, secure and appropriate housing for older people.
- 2, Encourage them to renovate, insulate and future proof existing housing stock including, introducing energy efficient savings equipment e.g. solar panel
3. End the right to buy and re-introduction of rent controls
4. Call upon UNISON branches and regions to assist in the campaign.

*National Retired Members' Committee*

## **Motion 14**

### **NEW VERSUS OLD STATE PENSION**

This conference notes that whilst the retention of the Triple Lock for the year beginning April 2023 must be applauded, in no small part to our own campaigning, we need to be wary of what the future holds. Conference must not be complacent and we will need to keep fighting for its retention in the future.

However, the Triple Lock is no answer to the low state pension on which many rely in the UK, including many of our own low paid members who have been unable to afford to make contributions to occupational pensions.

Conference needs to be aware that there is a further injustice for pensioners, the growing difference between the old and new state pensions. The old stage pension rose to a maximum of £156.20 per week or £8,122 per year in April and the new flat rate state pension for those born after 1950 increase to £203.85 per week or £10,600 per year. This difference of nearly £2,500 per annum will widen as years pass.

Many low paid members have been unable to afford to make contributions to occupational pensions and have been forced to rely on the state pension when they retired. The new flat rate state pension for those born after 1950 is still inadequate

but those born in the preceding years will continue to be severely disadvantaged under the current two-tier system.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to:

1. Liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention, Scottish Pensioners Forum, Age UK, the Trades Union Congress, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and other relevant organisations to press the Government to raise the level of the old state pension to the equivalent level as the new state pension to prevent this disparity.
2. Continue to campaign with the above for the continued retention of the Triple Lock.
3. Raise awareness of the issue amongst retired members and encourage them to lobby their MPs on the need for parity between the two state pensions and the continued retention of the Triple Lock, through regions and branches.

*National Retired Members' Committee*

## **Motion 15**

### TRANSPORT BY TRAIN

Conference notes with concern how badly served pensioners are by rail services and that matters have gone from bad to worse since privatisation. We are faced with cancellations; overcrowded trains; inadequate staffing at stations, on platforms and on trains; inaccessible platforms; closure of ticket offices; and lack of toilets and refreshment facilities on trains.

The government has been forced to take some rail companies, whose services were especially poor, back into public ownership.

Profits made by privatised companies have been paid to shareholders or to overseas rail companies, some of which are in their public ownership. We are in effect subsidising rail travel in Europe and beyond and providing dividends to shareholders.

Transport by train is an essential public service for many pensioners and lack of services affects older people disproportionately. Pensioners have been amongst the hardest hit because in many instances they have been unable to get assistance in making travel plans; have had problems buying tickets online or using ticket machines; and have been deterred by the high cost of rail fares even with a Railcard. Operators need to be reminded that they owe a duty of care towards vulnerable passengers and without adequate staffing levels passenger safety has been or will be compromised.

Whilst research by Age UK suggests that travel by car is the preferred form of transport for older people, this is not sustainable. The high cost of electric cars will be a deterrent for those pensioners who cannot afford the cost. There are many

pensioners who do not have access to their own car, are unable to drive and cannot afford taxi fares.

We must fight to preserve and enhance existing train routes together with an accessible and affordable transport system that is safe and secure but also convenient.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council, Labour Link, the National Pensioners Convention, Scottish Pensioners Forum, Age UK, the Trades Union Congress, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and other relevant organisations to:

1. Campaign for a properly funded, affordable and accessible rail service. A rail transport system that places staffing and service user needs before profits.
2. Campaign for retention of station booking offices, station staff and guards on trains together with improved toilet and refreshment facilities on trains.
3. Campaign for all existing routes to be retained and previously closed stations and routes to be reopened.
4. Campaign for investment in reliable modern rolling stock to ensure it meets current and future demands. A rail service that meets the needs of pensioners and provides a cleaner environment.
5. End rail franchises and bring back the national rail network into public ownership.
6. Call upon UNISON branches and regions to support the national campaign.

*National Retired Members' Committee*

## STATE RETIREMENT PENSION AND THE TRIPLE LOCK

### State retirement pension and the Triple Lock

Retired Members Conferences have frequently carried motions relating to maintaining the Triple Lock on State retirement Pensions (SRP).

The triple lock has been a core commitment of every government budget since 2010, when it was announced by the Coalition Government made up of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. It was a response to the fact that the real value of the state pension had fallen, and it looked to guarantee that this vital state benefit would continue to rise every year.

The 'triple lock' refers to the idea that the state pension rises in line with the highest of these three measures every year:

1. Average earnings
2. Prices, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). (measured in the year from September every year)
3. 2.5 per cent

Whilst the annual rise is applied to the basic state pension as well as the new state pension (for people retiring after 2016) it doesn't cover the additional elements (Graduated Pension, SERPS or that element based on deferring state pension) that many state pensioners enjoy through their National Insurance payment record.

The government re-installed the Triple Lock for pensions for the 2023-2024 and the basic state pension, additional pension and Graduated Contribution and each rose in excess of 10% (although not equally). This, however has not been typical in the past 10 years. For example for the pension year 2021-2022 these same three elements rose by 2.50%, 0.47% and 0.55%. This year's increase across the board is not typical and consequentially this conference calls on UNISON's National Retired Committee to:

- a. campaign for all elements of the State Retirement Pension to be subject to Triple Lock increases
- b. Bring this anomaly to the attention of the National Pensioners Convention and for them to amend (if required) their campaign material to reflect the historic differentials in pension increases
- c. Ensure that our representatives on Labour Link draw the Labour Party's attention to this issue so that the Party includes reference to it in its continual support for the Triple Lock mechanism.

*West Midlands Community Branch*

## **DIRTY MONEY**

Conference is only too aware of the high street bank closures we hear of on a daily basis. The desperate drive for a cashless society by the banks and in part by Government would lead anyone to think cash was dirty money which needs to be withdrawn from society as quickly as possible.

It is not true to say, 'with the rise in online banking and the speed and convenience that it brings, the presence of physical bank branches has become less important', tell that to the over 5 million of older or vulnerable people who struggle to gain access to a bank to go about their daily business.

It is encouraging to note that the relentless closure of high street banks was debated in parliament on Tuesday 28 February 2023. Alex Davies-Jones, Pontypridd Labour MP, highlighted the devastating impact this was having in our communities. This was acknowledged and accepted, in the same debate, by the government minister - Andrew Griffith.

In the late 1980s, over 20,000 bank branches were open across the UK. Today, just 5,000 bank branches remain, a 75% decrease since 1980!

A report by Which? shows 397 branches have closed since 2015, leaving 395.

Major high street banks point to reduced visits and increased use of online and mobile banking when justifying closures.

But a regional division of Age UK says hundreds of older people face difficulties as a result.

About 40% of over-65s do not manage their money online, according to Age UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

With the older and vulnerable being abandoned by the bank companies they are now forced to travel unacceptable distances to their next nearest branch. A round trip of 40 miles is not uncommon. If they rely on public transport, which is continually being eroded, then a trip to the bank becomes a 'Mission Impossible'.

Conference will agree, many older people do not use the internet regularly or may live in parts of Britain which do not have reliable enough broadband connection, this means online banking is not a real option. Also, the Government's Policy Paper, 'Digital Inclusion Strategy' acknowledges that over half of those aged 65+ do not have basic online skills.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues cash usage has increased, not decreased, budgeting with cash has and will continue to work for the majority of older people.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) who is the financial regulatory body in the UK which operates independently of Government, but is however financed by the financial services industry, set out the expectations if a bank is proposing a closure but they lack the regulatory power or inclination to step in to prevent it happening.

It is not fair that the Government hides behind statements like, 'to close a branch is a commercial issue for banks and building societies and the Government does not intervene in these decisions.'

The government fails to see it is a community issue which affects us all especially the older and vulnerable. The government does have the power and right to intervene in closures and it should.

Therefore, this conference asks the National Retired Members Committee to:

1. Raise Retired Members concerns with UNISON National Executive Committee and welcome any support from other sections of UNISON especially our Young Members section.
2. to campaign alongside organisations such as, National Pensioner Convention (NPC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) and other sympathetic groups to stop high street bank closures, as a high percentage of retired members do not have access to digital equipment or do not have adequate IT skills to access digital (online) banking,
3. To review the FCA document on 'Branch and ATM closures or conversions; good practice and areas for improvement', and put forward any recommendations they feel appropriate to challenge the current wording and introduce the concept of communities and not just customers.
4. Make contact with the government minister responsible for the FCA or the High Street with a view that they create Powers to intervene when banks have no sound business case for closure.

*Yorkshire - Humberside Region*

## **Motion 18**

### **BRITAIN'S RAILWAY TICKET OFFICES SCHEDULED FOR CLOSURE**

Almost 1,000 ticket offices are set to close across the country with the loss of thousands of jobs and creating accessibility problems for different types of travellers, especially for older people and persons with disabilities not using smart phones or computers, without ticket offices and on station support a huge swathe of passengers could be excluded from the railway altogether.

The Rail Industry is carrying out a consultation in August and is scheduled to start the process of closing offices from October.



As an example, when travelling using a ticket purchased on Trainline for a specific train operating company, and the train is cancelled with a need to rebook on a different company, this is where the ticket office is important as staff have access to trains and timetables and can advise which new train will be required and how to obtain a refund. When booking at a Ticket office, staff advise on train times best fare option and actually print a ticket with a QR code for the train ticket inspector. Smart phones with a ticket rely on the phone being charged and being readily accessible for inspection this does not always happen, or the person has the wrong type of ticket.

Action is necessary to support the Rail Union in trying to stop these Ticket office closures which will dramatically effect older persons.

Therefore, conference calls on the Government to stop the closure of Ticket offices which will have detrimental effect on older persons

Therefore, this conference asks the National Retired Members Committee to:

1. Raise our concerns with UNISON National Executive Committee and welcome support from other sections of UNISON.
2. To campaign alongside organizations such as, National Pensioners Convention NPC and Trade Union Congress {TUC} and other sympathetic groups who realise that a very high number of UNISON Retired Members do not have access to relevant IT to do business without train station ticket office staff. This campaign is to stop the closure of booking offices.

*Yorkshire - Humberside Region*

## **Motion 19**

### **JUSTICE FOR THE WINDRUSH GENERATION**

#### Justice for the Windrush Generation

Conference is extremely concerned at the continuing detriment suffered by retired members (or their heirs) who migrated to the United Kingdom in the 1950's and 1960s, mostly from the Caribbean, who comprise the "Windrush Generation named after the ship, Empire Windrush which sailed from Jamaica to the UK exactly seventy five years ago.

The discrimination people of the Windrush Generation suffered through harassment and wrongful deportation by the Home Office was comprehensively detailed by the independent review Wendy Williams in he "Windrush Lessons Learned " review in March 2020. That report was accepted by the then Home Secretary who promised "unequivocal support" for all of the report's recommendations.

Earlier this year, Home Secretary Suella Braverman, arbitrarily decided that the Home Office could disregard three of the report's recommendations. These are:

1. Reconciliation events with those affected by the scandal
2. The appointment of a Migrants' Commissioner., and
3. The appointment of an Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Conference believes that, by abandoning these commitments, the government has fundamentally undermined the first principle of the Lessons Learned review which emphasised the need for sincerity in any apology.

Conference applauds UNISON's continuing campaign to reverse this decision of the Home Office and the calling out of the shockingly slow progress made by that office in compensating victims of their injustice, addressing historic wrongs and changing their own culture which has treated so many people wrongly. Even the Compensation Scheme cannot be accessed without the victims facing further scrutiny, heavy evidential demands, applications placed into a bureaucratic limbo, and even when addressed, treated with scepticism. Too many of the Windrush Generation feel that this is nit restorative justice, just more of the same....

Conference calls on the National Retired members Committee to:

- a. Campaign for recommendations in Wendy Williams Lessons Learned review to be implemented in full
- b. Work with the National Executive Council and other appropriate bodies within UNISON to publicise the continuing discrimination against the Windrush Generation and seek full and proper restorative justice for those wrongly harmed by the Home Office over the past 75 years.

Islington Local Government Retired Members Group

*Islington UNISON*

## TIME FOR A QUADRUPLE LOCK

Conference recognises the excellent work UNISON has done to protect the triple lock on pensions over the years despite repeated attempts by the to avoid it.

The triple lock is defined as being guarantee that the state pension will increase annually by 2.5% or the rate of wage increases or inflation whichever is the greater of the three is the greater. Conference notes that the government measures inflation by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as opposed to the Retail Price index(RPI), the latter being the index unions and pensioner groups consider most suited to ordinary life.

However, whilst the increases provided by the triple lock are welcome, they are further undermined by there being no complementary increase in tax thresholds for pensioners.

Conference believes this erodes the fundamental basis of the triple lock, and wishes another criterion to be added to ensure that pension increases are not clawed back by disproportionate tax thresholds.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to:

1. Develop a campaign for a quadruple lock on pensions which would see tax thresholds for pensioners rising in proportion to the increase awarded by the triple lock
2. Work with the National Executive Council, the National Pensioners Convention, the Scottish pensioners Forum, Age UK and other appropriate bodies to seek to ensure the full value of increases in state pensions under the triple lock are properly passed on to pensioners.

Islington Local Government Retired Members Group

*Islington UNISON*

## TACKLING PENSIONER POVERTY

Conference notes with real concern the ongoing cost of living crisis, which has impacted significantly on the costs of food and energy particularly. Conference notes that for older people on fixed, low incomes, rising costs place them under great financial pressure.

Conference notes that increasing numbers of pensioners in Northern Ireland are living in poverty, with 16% of pensioners in Northern Ireland living in relative poverty.

Conference believes that no older person should live in poverty and regrets that an Anti-Poverty strategy for Northern Ireland has yet to be brought forward.

Conference acknowledges the efforts of our activists and retired members in Northern Ireland in supporting the ICTU 'Workers Demand Better' campaign calling for action to be taken to address the cost of living crisis both by the UK government and devolved government in Northern Ireland.

Conferences therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee, working with the Northern Ireland Region, to support ongoing efforts to tackle pensioner poverty in Northern Ireland.

*UNISON Northern Ireland*

## **Motion 22**

### **NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL TRANSPORT:**

Given the current disarray in the provision of Public Transport, with cutbacks, cancellations etc. the model of privatised services has shown itself to be totally unsuited to the needs of the populace (particularly the needs of the older population).

We therefore commit ourselves to a different model of Public Transport (eg, buses, trains etc.), one which should be organised and maintained by "Regional Transport Partnerships" comprising Local Councils, County Councils, and regional bodies. Such Regional Partnerships would be ideally placed to effectively plan and provide for local integrated networks.

We would ask the National Retired Members Committee to campaign with the appropriate organisations to achieve a regional model of public transport.

*Wakefield Local Government*

## **Motion 23**

### **AMENDMENT TO RULE OPTION 1**

Conference wishes the following to be considered as one of the choices for the two motions and/or amendments to Rule to be submitted by the Retired Members' Organisation to National Delegate Conference 2024 in accordance with Rule D.1.10.4:

"Rule D – Structure of the union at national level.

In Rule D.2 – National Executive Council

In D,2.1, insert “two retired members’ seats” between “young members seats” and “and two disabled members’ seats”.

and

Insert new Rule between existing D.2.5 and D.2.6 to read:

‘D 2.6 Retired Members’ Seats

There will be an additional two representative, at least one of which must be a woman, for Retired Members elected from a national constituency of retired members in all regions.

No member shall be a candidate for election to the Retired Members’ seats unless she/he.

1.is a retired member when the period of office starts as set out in Rule D.2.7.1

2.has received two nominations from any branch or regional retired members’ groups or the National Retired Members’ Committee.

Retired Members’ representatives shall be entitled to vote on any issue not relating to the pay and conditions of members in employment in accordance with the provisions of Rule C.2.6.3

A Retired Members’ representative who returns to paid employment (as defined in Rule C.2.6.2) will cease to be a representative upon taking up such employment.’

And renumber subsequent sections of Rule D.2 accordingly.”

*Islington UNISON*

**Motion 24**

LET’S MAKE CARE WORK – A NATIONAL CARE SERVICE FOR ENGLAND

Conference welcomes UNISON’s new campaign “Let’s Make Care Work” which is campaigning for a National Care Service in England.

Plans for a National Care Service for England were first presented 13 years ago by the last Labour government shortly before it’s election defeat. Since then, adult social care and support has gone downhill fast and there is an ever-increasing adult social care emergency. Even the well-intentioned principles of wellbeing, personalisation and control contained in the Care Act 2014 has not been translated into practice. Funding cuts have left councils struggling to pay enough to secure safe and suitable care, with nothing left over to invest in new facilities.

Conference recognises that older people are directly affected by this crisis in adult social care, whether as users of, or carers within, the care service, or are aware they may need to access care in the future, with all the cost implications that will have on assets, savings and pensions.

On 8th June 2023, UNISON and the Fabian Society launched “Support Guaranteed”, envisaging a long-term solution to the crisis and setting out ten principles which should underpin a new National Care Service including:

1. Nationally consistent provision, with an end to postcode lotteries in support and care
2. Services for everyone with support needs regardless of their means, and affordable to all.
3. Services rooted in local communities and networks of support, delivered by properly resourced accountable local authorities
4. Clear legal entitlements with support to help people access their rights

Support that is integrated with housing, the NHS, DWP and other help whenever necessary

Choice and control for individuals and their families to lead the life they want in the home they want.

Conference notes this plan is only for England and that different models of adult social care provision is being pursued in the devolved administrations and congratulates UNISON on its opposition to the Scottish Government’s National Care Services (Scotland) Bill, which would leave profiteering at the heart of care in Scotland.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members’ Committee to:

- a. Support the campaign for a National Care Service in England
- b. Publicise the campaign through regional and branch retired members groups
- c. Work with the National Executive Council and other organisations such as the National Pensioners Convention, Age UK and other relevant groups to co-ordinate campaigning for a National Care Service in England
- d. Liaise with UNISON Labour Link to lobby for a commitment to a National Care Service in England to be included in the Labour manifesto at the next general election.

# **AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

## **Conflicts with an existing rule**

AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDER 3.1

SPEAKING

Add new sentence at end:

A branch delegate from the same Region may move a Regional motion or amendment if appointed by their Regional Retired Members Committee

*Scotland Region*

## **MOTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

### **Beyond Remit of Conference:**

DEMOCRACY DENIED?

To claim that retired members are properly represented on the National Executive Council would be disingenuous. We are even denied the right to vote in the election of those who would serve on the Council.

Why is this? In part the cause is political manoeuvring, also tradition and an element of indifference by some that a substantial portion of UNISON's membership is denied democratic representation.

The solution is for a rule change to be passed at the National Delegates Conference, allowing two retired members to be voted for and thus serve on the NEC on the same terms as other Council members. The Hampshire branch has in the past tried to introduce such a rule change at the NDC, without success.

Conference instructs the National Retired Members Committee to lead a campaign to make the NEC and our wider membership aware of the retired members' call for the same democratic representation on the NEC enjoyed by UNISON's working membership.

*Hampshire*

## THE SOCIAL CARE CRISIS - FOR A NATIONAL CARE SERVICE

This Retired Members' Conference notes that:

1. The current Government presides over a continuing and worsening crisis in a largely privatised social care sector
2. The Covid-19 pandemic claimed the lives of thousands of older people in care homes, highlighting the impact of chronic underfunding and the detrimental effects of a profit-driven model on the quality of care provided
3. Severe staff shortages across both the care home and domiciliary elements of the sector, with some 165,000 posts unfilled and vacancy rates running between 10% and 12% by last year (2022)
4. Private equity firms now control nearly 13% of all bed capacity in for profit homes or some 55,000 beds
5. A report to House of Commons committee in August 2022 suggested that the numbers in need of social care provision were likely to rise from around 3.5 million to 5.2 million in 2038.

This Conference believes that:

- a. There is an urgent need to address both chronic underfunding of the sector and to reverse the damaging consequences for the workforce and those reliant on services of rampant privatisation
- b. The pay, terms and conditions of the social care workforce profoundly affect the quality of care
- c. The profit motive should be removed from the provision of social care
- d. The ongoing crisis demands the creation of a National Care Service, based on the founding principles of the National Health Service (publicly-funded, free at the point of need) and fully integrated with the NHS.

This Conference resolves to:



- I. Call on the National Retired Members' Committee to actively contribute to the wider union's campaign for a National Care Service
- II. Support the demand through UNISON's Labour Link on a future Labour government to legislate for the creation of a National Care Service as outlined at point 4 above
- III. Support the introduction of transitional measures to ensure the real living wage is the minimum hourly rate, abolish the use of "zero hour" contracts and guaranteed home visit times of at least half an hour.

*Camden UNISON*

## COMMUNICATING WITH RETIRED MEMBERS

Retired Members have been witnesses to the transformation of everyday life through the development of information technology, which unfortunately UNISON as an organisation has failed to adopt to support good organisation and communication with its members.

Retired Members Officers face barriers in establishing and maintaining communication with Retired Members, due to the lack of a robust membership system. Other organisations with less resources enable officers to keep in communication with members with systems that allow directed communication with identified groups i.e. women, young members, retired members etc, in ways that meet the requirements of GDPR. The current system for identifying and approving access to the membership data base could be developed to encompass other branch officers. There are also systems that identify individual members who do not have an email address and for whom an address label can be printed.

In addition, the current workloads on Branch Secretaries hinders good communication with members. UNISON needs to develop systems that supports good communication with members without placing additional workloads on Branch Secretaries especially for branches that does not have full time secondment. Recently there has been recognition by the wider organisation that Retired Members can support working members, and it is hoped that such supportive activities by Retired Members will further be expanded.

This Conference instructs the National Retired Members Committee to:

1. Collect evidence and suggestions from Regional Retired Members Committees about how an improved communication system would benefit the wider organisation.

2. Approach the National Executive Council via the General Secretary to request information about current and/or future plans for the development of a system that will meet current and future needs.

3. Develop a system to enable National Officers, Regional Committee Officers and Branch Officers, including Retired Members Officers, to email, and for those members without an email address to post communications.

Report back on progress to the 2024 National Retired Members Conference.

*North West Region*

## SUPPORT THE ETHICAL CARE CHARTER

From the results of their survey of care workers, UNISON developed the Ethical Care Charter with the aim of encouraging local authorities to improve provision in the care sector.

The way in which care homes were treated during the recent pandemic shows how little they are valued by government. It is certainly an area which is rightly called the 'Cinderella service'. The area is not helped by the reduced provision of local authority run care homes meaning that private providers have a great deal of influence on the sector.

Since its inception, the Charter has had limited success. Although some local authorities have signed up to its sentiments, there are many which have not. Even where the Charter has been accepted in principle, its practical application has been sadly lacking.

Conference asks Retired members to raise it locally and support their local branch in raising the status of the Charter and ensuring that its principles are acted upon to the benefit of both providers and users.

*North West Region*

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2. The Covid-19 pandemic claimed the lives of thousands of older people in care homes, highlighting the impact of chronic underfunding and the detrimental effects of a profit-driven model on the quality of care provided
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4. Private equity firms now control nearly 13% of all bed capacity in for profit homes or some 55,000 beds
5. A report to House of Commons committee in August 2022 suggested that the numbers in need of social care provision were likely to rise from around 3.5 million to 5.2 million in 2038.

This Conference believes that:

- a. There is an urgent need to address both chronic underfunding of the sector and to reverse the damaging consequences for the workforce and those reliant on services of rampant privatisation
- b. The pay, terms and conditions of the social care workforce profoundly affect the quality of care
- c. The profit motive should be removed from the provision of social care
- d. The ongoing crisis demands the creation of a National Care Service, based on the founding principles of the National Health Service (publicly-funded, free at the point of need) and fully integrated with the NHS.

This Conference resolves to:

- I. Call on the National Retired Members' Committee to actively contribute to the wider union's campaign for a National Care Service
- II. Support the demand through UNISON's Labour Link on a future Labour government to legislate for the creation of a National Care Service as outlined at point 4 above
- III. Support the introduction of transitional measures to ensure the real living wage is the minimum hourly rate, abolish the use of "zero hour" contracts and guaranteed home visit times of at least half an hour, and

- IV. Submit this motion, as suitably amended, to the 2024 National Delegate Conference.

*Camden UNISON*

## LIVING PENSION

Conference notes the work done by Silver Voices, the on line organisation for older people, on the creation of a new state pension policy. This calls for the state pension to be aligned with 50% of UK average earnings, which would achieve a pension, at current figures, of £320 per week. This would have the effect of making obsolete the Pension Credit system which is applicable to a minority of those receiving the state pension and, even so has a poor take up rate, saving the Treasury an estimated £2bn per annum. Also, this would scrap the need for the Triple Lock as pensions would be aligned to average wages.

Conference therefore resolves to

1. Call upon the National Retired Members Committee to pursue this policy in conjunction with all pensioner organisations within the 4 nations of the UK
2. make direct representation, subject to NEC authorisation, to the DWP with the intention of persuading them to put this policy into practice
3. ensure, via Labour Link, that the Labour Party is aware of and understands the policy and is persuaded to adopt it
4. make representation to all other opposition parties and those represented within the devolved parliaments to try to ensure their support for this policy
5. Encourage Regional and Branch Retired Members Committees to pursue this policy with a view to gaining support for it at regional and local level.

Conference further instructs the National Retired Members Committee to report back on progress on this issue to the 2024 Conference.

*Eastern Region*

## VOTER ID

Conference notes that politicians from across the political spectrum, from Jacob Rees Mogg to Angela Eagle and Angela Rayner, have reported that the need to provide photographic ID at the Local Elections in May of this year has deterred older people from being able to vote. There is evidence of people being turned away from polling stations because of insufficient ID and further, of people simply not turning up because they thought they did not have the right identification.

Although this legislation was created with the clear intention of deterring younger people to vote, its effect has at least been felt equally by older people, many of whom do not have passports, driving licences or bus passes. They also have a tradition of going to the polling station in person rather than applying for postal votes.

Mr Rees Mogg has gone so far as to describe this legislation as “gerrymandering” and, in that it has the effect of deterring many older people from voting, it is difficult to argue with that analysis.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members Committee to combine with the NPC, the TUC and all representative organisations for older people within the 4 nations of the UK in calling upon the Government to repeal this legislation prior to elections in 2024.

It also calls upon regions and branches to campaign with Local Authorities to achieve the same end.

*Eastern Region*

## PENSIONER POVERTY WILL LEAD TO AN ALARMING RISE IN EXCESS

### DEATHS

Conference notes that since the hike in gas and electricity costs from the 1st April this year, pensioners in today’s society are being faced with a future of poverty due to the worst cost of living crisis in the history of the UK. The Government’s Energy Support Scheme came to an end from April leaving households having to find an extra £66 per month to cover their gas and electricity. Pensioners are becoming more dependant on foodbanks as the cost of food and electricity becomes ever more costly and unaffordable. Its not what our pensioners worked all their life to look forward too when they retire.

This is a worrying time for millions of our pensioners who are barely managing across the UK and is going to leave them £682 plus per year worse off as a result of

the increases. The impact this will have on the mental health of pensioners will lead to older people giving up on life and taking their own lives as a result. Excess deaths are set to rise at an alarming rate over the next few years, with many thousands making choices whether they can afford to heat or eat or just giving up. This government has let our pensioners and the older population down and we are not prepared to tolerate being treated like second class citizens and been given sticking plasters in place of real help.

Conference agrees that its time now for real change in government that will treat our pensioners and the electorate with fairness and dignity instead of misleading and neglecting the population who voted them into power in the first instance.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members to work with the National Retired Members Committee to lead a campaign to:

1. Ensure that Improved facilities be put in place to tackle pensioner poverty and ensure older people are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve.
2. Bring back the Free 75+ TV Licence for our older people who in many cases are living on their own and depend on the TV to access what is happening in the outside world. This will help tackle loneliness and isolation especially in rural areas.

*National Retired Members' Committee*

## RETIRED MEMBERS, AN UNDER-USED RESOURCE?

This Conference notes that the public services in which UNISON organises have been decimated by years of cuts and austerity. As a result, many experienced, duly accredited, activists have left work due to voluntary early retirement or redundancy. Many of those activists would normally have remained in employment until closer to normal retirement age.

Many experienced activists remain committed to the trade union on reaching their intended retirement age and would be prepared to remain in activity. There are opportunities at present for willing retired members to help with clerical or administrative tasks and with recruitment.

The UNISON Rulebook however places restrictions on retired members. They may not hold office other than as Retired Members' Officer or as Labour Link Officer. They may not give advice to members nor can they represent members or negotiate with the Employer on behalf of the Union.

While there may be good reasons for restrictions on retired members' involvement in the pay terms and conditions of working members, there are many other functions that retired members could carry out that would not conflict with this principle.

Further, many other retired former UNISON members also want to remain involved in their trade union. They however want to be able to have an effect on the trade union and other issues that they are still passionate about despite no longer being in employment.

This Conference therefore calls on the NEC to carry out a review of the Rules as they affect retired members, consulting widely with all stakeholders. The aim of the review should be twofold;

1. consider the possibility of extending the Branch roles and functions retired members could carry out, and
2. consider ways in which retired members' access to the decision-making processes of the Union on general social issues can be facilitated.
3. Present a report with recommendations to National Delegate Conference

*Scotland Region*

## THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The climate emergency is, arguably, the most pressing problem facing humanity. UNISON, at national, regional and branch level has supported and been active in the campaign/s on this issue. Our union, at all levels, fully accepts that this is a trade union issue. The Scottish Region, and branches were extremely active during the recent COP 26 Conference in Glasgow, Oct/Nov 2021. Our region was represented at COP 27 and will be at COP 28 this year.

Closer to home, and immediately, climate change has become a trade union issue. In June 2023 the leader of the GMB took issue with his counterpart in the Labour Party when the latter stated his intention to stop drilling for oil in the North Sea on day one of a future Labour Government. The GMB general secretary pointed out that the "green" replacement jobs for his members would not be in place in time for such a move.

The climate emergency is a present, and growing, issue for our, and other trade unions!

It has also been established that older people suffer disproportionately from climate change. They now generally have a longer life expectancy and extreme heat puts a stress on anybody's body, but if you are old and/or frail it can be harder. In addition, certain medications older people take, for blood pressure or cholesterol, reduce the body's ability to thermo-regulate. The risk of heatstroke, which is potentially fatal, increases because older adults may be less mobile and thus less able to reach cooler locations in a heatwave. They may also be socially isolated and less able to seek help. Impaired cognitive function may also make it harder for the elderly to find solutions. The air pollution often associated with heatwaves intensifies the problems.

The Chicago heatwave of July 1995, for instance, caused 514 heat-related deaths; 72% of the fatalities were over 65. (US Environmental Protection Agency 1996)

Half of the deaths during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in August 2005 were aged 75 or over. fatalities in this age group numbered 380. (Social Science Research Council, 2006)

In Bangladesh 11,300 elderly people were adversely affected by the serious climate related flooding in 2003. (Help Age 2004)

When Hurricane Sandy hit New York in 2012, almost half of those who died were over 65. (Independent. 12th June 2019)

Any particular episode of extreme weather may be linked only loosely to climate change. But the overall relationship is clear: aside from heatwaves, climate change will bring other kinds of extreme weather and disasters. Elderly people will be disproportionately affected. Mortality is always higher among older people in such situations as they can't get out of harm's way quickly enough.

NHS boards throughout the UK have emphasised that older members of the population will be disproportionately adversely affected by increasing abnormality of weather conditions.

It also has to be remembered that there is a moral argument that older citizens of western capitalist countries have been benefiting from nature/fossil fuel extraction to the detriment of future generations.

There is little doubt that the climate emergency is an older persons' issue!

Conference notes that:

1. The Earth's temperature has already risen by 1 degree above pre-industrial levels. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report in 1990 warned that we only have 12 years to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5degrees. Carbon emissions need to be cut by 45% by 2030, and reach zero carbon by 2050 in order to avoid a dangerous tipping point.

2. The tremendous impact of the school students strikes in shifting government complacency over climate change forcing the Government to amend the 2008 Climate Change act.

3. The role played by UNISON, both nationally and locally, in the global action on 20th September 2019. Many branches, including Dundee City, provided organisational, admin and equipment support to the school students involved. The action involved millions of students and workers worldwide.

Conference Believes:

a. Climate change is an older person's and trade union issue.



b. That the future of our planet is at risk if we don't organise now to force governments to cut emissions in line with the IPCC report and to cut out fossil fuels as soon as possible and,

c. replacing these with renewable energy projects including carbon capture

d. That we must keep the pressure up. The school students have led the way but the trade union movement as a whole must continue its involvement to ensure that they don't fight alone.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members Committee:

i. To support any further calls for a climate action similar to that of school students on 20 September 2019.

ii. To support motions at TUC Congress and/or UNISON National Delegate Conference calling for action on the climate emergency.

iii. To campaign for and encourage retired members to support and become involved in climate change initiatives by UNISON at branch, regional and national level.

*Scotland Region*

## A LIVING PENSION, LIVING WITH DIGNITY

Our elderly, who have contributed so much to this country and continue to play an important role in looking after grandchildren and contributing to charitable work receive one of the lowest State Pensions in Europe.

This is both intolerable and unnecessary since the UK is the fifth richest country in the world.

With the cost of living increasing, inflation increasing, the cost of food continuing to increase, electricity and gas bills doubling, pensioners health and wellbeing is under enormous threat.

Action has to be taken:

This conference calls on UNISON to campaign to reinstate the triple lock on state pensions as the first phase of addressing this issue.

To progressively increase the state pension to the mid-payment level of other European countries and thereafter maintain the state pension at least at the level of the fifth richest European country's payment.

*UNISON Scotland Further Education*

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - A BLESSING OR A DANGER?

Artificial intelligence has been in the process of development for a number of years. It is increasingly making its presence felt in both society and the workplace.

It has been predicted that AI will lead to changes in the workplace and society so significant that 'they will exceed those of the industrial revolution'.

Several of those leading the field in the UK and USA have expressed concerns at the speed of developments which currently are subject to little control. It has been suggested in the future that people could be paid not to work.

Undoubtedly many good things will result from the advance of AI. However, it seems likely that every aspect of our lives is likely to face significant change, not necessarily to our advantage or welfare. The consequences for UNISON retired members could potentially be grossly confusing and maybe devastating.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members Committee to work with the National Executive Council:

To closely monitor the inevitable progress of AI and to formulate action plans and policies now, to meet this developing science and its probable effects on our retired and working members in both the wider society and the workplace.

*Hampshire*

### **Could place the union in legal jeopardy:**

AN INDULGENCE FOR THE NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE'S STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Not Printed.