



**Young Members'  
Conference  
Newcastle  
24-26 November 2023**

**PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

## **INDEX**

### **MOTIONS ADMITTED TO THE AGENDA**

1	PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG WOMEN MEMBERS IN THE UNION	National Women's Committee
2	YOUNG BLACK MEMBERS AND MENTAL HEALTH	National Black Members' Committee
3	YOUNG MEMBERS AND RETIRED MEMBERS – A LEARNING AND CAMPAIGNING OPPORTUNITY	Eastern Region
4	PEER MENTORING FOR YOUNG LGBT+ MEMBERS	National LGBT+ Committee
5	MATERNITY PAY	East Midlands Region
6	BUILDING THE LEGACY OF THE YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS	National Young Members' Forum
7	YOUNG MEMBER FOCUSED TRAINING ON STRIKES AND BALLOTS	Greater London Region

### **MOTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

SUPPORTING YOUNG MOTHERS AT WORK	Northern Region
YOUNG MOTHERS AT THE FOREFRONT OF GREEN UNISON	Northern Region
PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	Scotland Region
SUPPORTING MEMBER PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE INCREASED USE OF HYBRID ARRANGEMENTS AT NATIONAL YOUNG MEMBERS CONFERENCE	South West Region
YOUNG MEMBER'S PAY AND STUDENT DEBT	Greater London Region
RADICAL CHANGE IN THE RENTED SECTOR	Scotland Region

HEALTHCARE FOR YOUNG TRANS, NON-BINARY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE	National LGBT+ Committee
THE HOUSING CRISIS AND THE IMPACT ON UNISON YOUNG MEMBERS	South West Region
62 YEARS TOO LONG – END THE US BLOCKADE OF CUBA	North West Region
END THE INEQUALITY – ORGANISING APPRENTICES FOR THE LIVING WAGE	North West Region
BUILDING ON THE AGE CHANGE FOR AN INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY	National Young Members' Forum
UNISON YOUNG MEMBERS SHOULD BE RECOGNISED AS A SELF-ORGANISED GROUP	Eastern Region
BRANCH REPRESENTATION AT YOUNG MEMBERS' CONFERENCE	East Midlands Region
PEER MENTORING FOR YOUNG LGBT+ MEMBERS	National LGBT+ Committee

## **MOTIONS ADMITTED TO THE AGENDA**

### **1. PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG WOMEN MEMBERS IN THE UNION**

Conference, UNISON has more than 1.3 million members and activists of which more than 70% are women. This means that there are over 9 hundred thousand women members scattered across the twelve regions and over 1000 branches. We know we have around 85 thousand young members, so if we use the same percentage of 70% for women this means that we have around 60 thousand young women in UNISON.

At the National Young Members' Forum's (NYMF) first conference in 2021, there were multiple motions calling on UNISON to do more to support and encourage young members into other avenues of activism within UNISON when they "age out" of the NYMF.

In 2021, UNISON launched a review of low paid women's participation aimed at creating an inclusive space for low paid women and increasing their participation within the union.

Conference notes that a survey of UNISON young members in November 2020 found that young women members are anxious about taking part in UNISON activities for the first time.

Conference we know that a percentage of young members will have multiple identities that span our self-organising spaces. To include young members and encourage greater participation in our union we need to be working together across the self-organised groups (SOGS).

To ensure we have more women activists and to engage women who are low paid workers we must remove all barriers that prevents them from participating in the union. UNISON will benefit and so will the women members. This is fundamental to the development of our women members.

If we can bring more young members into the women's and other SOGs, we can encourage and support them to continue their activism journey in UNISON. This can only be good for membership and activist development.

Conference calls on the National Young Members' Forum to work with the National Women's Committee to:

1. Consider setting up a network for young women members;
2. Encourage young women members to participate in the branch/regional women's committee;
3. Work with the NYMF to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young women members participating in the women's SOG;

4. Engage with branch and regional women SOGs to identify barriers for young women members in getting more active in UNISON, and to highlight positive measures and success stories in addressing these barriers;
5. Work with the other SOGs, young members' forum and other appropriate parts of the union to explore alternative ways of meeting that take into account the needs of all young members, including meeting venues, to increase the participation of all young women members in our union;
6. Encourage regional and branch groups to hold joint events with regional young members' forums wherever possible;
7. Encourage regions and branches to promote the new young members age limit of 30.

*National Women's Committee*

## **2. YOUNG BLACK MEMBERS AND MENTAL HEALTH**

The National Health Service (NHS) reported that 3.25 million individuals had contact with mental health services during 2021/22 which is approximately 5.8 percent of the population. The Mental Health Foundation tells us that 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24, yet many young people have not had appropriate interventions.

Statistics also tell us that mental health problems are higher for many Black communities. Black communities experience complex factors that adversely affect their mental health including social and economic inequalities, racism and discrimination, mental health stigma, and difficulties accessing appropriate support and interventions.

In the midst of the cost of living crisis, when we know that young Black workers are disproportionately represented in insecure and low-paid employment, and we know that rates of depression and anxiety are rising, poor mental health has an impact on many of our young Black members.

We therefore call on the National Young Members' Forum to work with the National Black Members' Committee to:

1. Signpost young Black workers to current support and mental health services that are available;
2. Highlight constructive steps employers can take to support staff with mental health issues;
3. Campaign against the stigma surrounding mental health.

*National Black Members' Committee*

### **3. YOUNG MEMBERS AND RETIRED MEMBERS – A LEARNING AND CAMPAIGNING OPPORTUNITY**

Although we may be at different ends of our working life, young members in UNISON have a lot in common with retired members.

For example:

1. Both are protected against age discrimination by the Equality Act 2010
2. Both can suffer from age discrimination
3. Our views are often ignored by society
4. Our competency is not trusted despite our abilities
5. Loneliness and mental health issues can become exacerbated
6. We both face challenges to accessing housing
7. There can be difficulties in accessing local services
8. Poverty can be issue because of poor pay rises / poor pension increases

Conference notes that UNISONs retired members have a great deal of knowledge and life experience.

For example:

- a. UNISON processes
- b. Recruitment and organising
- c. Connections to community groups and trade councils
- d. Campaigning skills

Conference also notes that there are many UNISON retired members that could benefit from the knowledge of UNISON young members.

This is knowledge exchange that UNISON could benefit from but is currently failing to do so.

Conference calls upon the National Young Members Forum to contact the National Retired Members Forum to discuss:

- i. The possibility of a mentoring scheme where retired members support young members when they first become activists.
- ii. How joint working between regional and national, young and retired members forums could be of mutual benefit.
- iii. To explore the possibility of joint campaigning to raise awareness of age discrimination.

*Eastern Region*

#### **4. PEER MENTORING FOR YOUNG LGBT+ MEMBERS**

Conference commends the campaign by the national Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) members committee on engaging young LGBT+ members. We have now over 100 members part of this network and we are growing!

As part of this campaign, the national LGBT+ committee has established a mentoring programme, where members of the national LGBT+ committee mentor members of the young LGBT+ network. This is going well and is invaluable to supporting young LGBT+ members. It is helping us to develop experience and understanding of UNISON structures, which can be complicated.

However, peer mentoring would also help to empower us and to build up confidence.

Why is this needed?

Young LGBT+ members in UNISON are underrepresented. Work has already been done with the setting up of a WhatsApp group for young LGBT+ members and regular Zoom meetings. Peer-to-peer mentoring would establish better communication of the network and help to further develop activists and build their confidence. It would also encourage young LGBT+ members to put themselves forward for positions at branch, regional or even national level.

Conference, while knowledge imparted from the mentor in the current mentoring programme is valuable, it does not always correlate with the lived experience of young LGBT+ members. Young members are more likely to identify with those around their age and feel comfortable discussing ideas within their own age group.

Peer mentoring would also allow the young LGBT+ member network to communicate better with each other. As the network members are from all around the United Kingdom (UK), apart from the WhatsApp groups and the caucus meetings at conference, the network members do not have much interaction with each other. This would foster better working relationships within the network so it can grow and work more cohesively.

We call on the National Young Members' Forum to work with the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. Continue the work of the national young LGBT+ members network and promote it among UNISON's young members
2. Consider different ways to develop peer to peer mentoring within the young LGBT+ member network
3. Work with UNISON College to develop peer to peer training for those interested

4. Develop resources such as a webinar and leaflets to promote peer to peer mentoring and any successes.

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

## **5. MATERNITY PAY**

A survey conducted this year by Censuswide found that young people were considering delaying or deciding not to have children. More than half cited financial reasons as the number one reason for this.

Conference notes that statutory maternity leave in the United Kingdom is issued for up to 52 weeks. Local Government Employees that have at least one year's continuous local government service at the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth, and returns to work for a period of three months after maternity leave, will be entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay and occupational maternity pay as follows:

6 weeks at 90% of full pay, 12 weeks at 50% pay plus Statutory Maternity Pay and 21 weeks on statutory provision.

With the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing inflation it is clear to see that the current maternity pay provision does not sufficiently cover everyday costs.

This can have a toll on the financial independence of women who will inevitably find themselves having to rely on partners, families, or personal savings to get by. This impacts household finance and can lead to an outdated typically male 'breadwinner' concept re-emerging in dual income households. This can add to the pressure of having a new baby and put strains on relationships and wellbeing within families. Furthermore, pregnancy serves as a risk factor for domestic violence and financial disempowerment can leave women trapped in desperate situations.

Conference welcomes the National Joint Council Joint Trade Union side calling for better maternity pay conditions for Local Government Employees.

Conference notes that the conditions offered within the National Health Service include:

1. 8 weeks' full pay, less any Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity Allowance;
2. 18 weeks' half pay plus any Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity allowance (providing the total does not exceed full pay);
3. 13 weeks' Statutory Maternity Pay) or Maternity allowance;
4. 13 weeks' unpaid leave.



Conference believes that maternity pay conditions being in line across public sector organisations will have a significantly positive impact on women, parents and wider society.

We are calling on the National Young Members Forum to

- a. Consider sending a motion to the Local Government Service Group Conference calling on it to produce a report which investigates maternity pay disparity between Local Government employers and other public sector organisations as well as the impact of current maternity pay on the wellbeing of parents
- b. Prioritise a maternity pay campaign through which we ensure that all young members are aware of the maternity and paternity pay, as well as shared parental leave conditions and provide resources to Young Member Officers so that they can campaign for better maternity/paternity pay locally.

*East Midlands Region*

## **6. BUILDING ON THE LEGACY OF THE YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS**

Conference notes that 2023 was designated UNISON's year of Black workers, with the aim of 'establishing legacy to generate change'.

Conference welcomes all the work that has been put into marking the year of Black workers, but notes that there is still a long way to go, particularly in regard to young Black members in UNISON.

Conference believes that it is essential that the voices of young Black workers are heard at all levels of UNISON, representing their issues and concerns.

Conference notes that young Black workers are still more likely to be in insecure and precarious work, are still more likely to be low paid, and are less likely to take up apprenticeships and other training and work schemes. Furthermore, despite historically low level of unemployment for young workers, young Black workers are more likely to be un- or under-employed.

Young Black members are under-represented as members and activists in UNISON and conference believes that following the year of Black workers it is important to address this and find solutions.

Furthermore, following the rule change increasing the age limit for young members, conference believes this is an opportunity to take positive action to recruit more young Black workers to the union and encourage young Black members to become more active in UNISON.

Conference asks the National Young Members Forum to:

1. Review the actions taken as a result of the motion to 2022 young members conference, and continue work on developing a mentoring and buddying scheme as agreed at Young Members Conference 2022;
2. Survey young Black members to identify any barriers to joining or becoming active in UNISON;
3. Review guidance on mentoring and buddying and consider updating if this is appropriate;
4. Work with the National Black Members Committee to establish a Young Black Members Network;
5. Continue to promote UNISON's resources for young Black members including the Young Black Members video, Defining Black and the Young Black Members award;
6. Consider producing resources aimed at encouraging young Black members to join UNISON and become active in the union;
7. Consider making further recommendations, such as reserved seats at Young Members conference for Black members.

*National Young Members' Forum*

## **7. YOUNG MEMBER FOCUSED TRAINING ON STRIKES AND BALLOTS**

In October 2022 Christina McAnea warned that UNISON-led strikes in 2023 could represent the largest strike by NHS workers since the early 1980s. More recently, UNISON posted a news update on the 5th of July this year titled “[the] Government should commit to NHS pay talks now to avoid possible strikes next year.” Many Young Members (YMs) were balloted within their workplace branches for the first time in their lives.

It is our opinion that a level of knowledge is often assumed within branches about the mechanisms and results of balloting and strike action. Some YMs have pointed to a lack of available and promoted information about these topics as part of the reason behind abstaining in strike ballots. This will, in our view, inevitably affect the turn-out for these votes, and potentially prevent thresholds being met either way.

Some YMs have also expressed concern about a lack of understanding about employment rights while taking strike action. Particular areas of concern were highlighted around how their jobs and pay would be protected during and after any participation in a strike.

Both of these factors combined may have led some YMs to feel unable to vote in these ballots, in part due to a lack of available information which was

accessible to them and specific to their concerns. YMs want to make informed choices when they receive these ballots, knowing their rights and expectations if action is passed.

With this in mind, and the potential for further strikes in the future, we propose that the National Young Members Forum should resolve to:

1. Liaise with Learning & Organising to organise workshops for YMs with the purpose of providing knowledge about:
  - a. how strike action is decided upon and balloted for;
  - b. how structures within UNISON operate and coordinate more generally, and
  - c. what UNISON members' legal rights are whilst taking part in strike action;
2. Liaise with Learning & Organising to develop consistently available learning materials on the topics mentioned above;
3. Promote YMs' and Regional Young Members Forums' involvement in local branches and committees' future balloting campaigns, to encourage appropriate information to be distributed with YMs in mind during these times;
4. Run an engagement campaign with potential YMs, who may or may not currently be UNISON members, to inform them of the topics mentioned above;
5. Survey YMs on:
  - i. The level of knowledge they feel they have on the topics mentioned above;
  - ii. The support they felt they received from their local branch and regional committees whilst the most recent balloting processes and strikes were ongoing;
  - iii. How this may be improved, if required, in the future.

*Greater London Region*

## **MOTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

### **Beyond Remit of the Conference**

#### **SUPPORTING YOUNG MOTHERS AT WORK**

Conference notes that the number of UK mothers in work reaches highest level for 20 years according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Conferences notes that the 2023 Working Families Index, found that significantly more parents are reporting it is 'financially harder to raise a family' and that 60% of respondents reported that making ends meet and raising a family has become more difficult 'over the last three years'.

Conference understands that a significant factor in this is childcare costs in the UK, with mothers twice as likely to report availability of childcare having an impact on their ability to work. This will not only impact the capacity to work, but also career progression, especially for mothers.

Conference believes that young UNISON members who are mothers are likely to be disproportionately affected by the burden of childcare costs and the cost of living crisis more widely, as they are more likely to be in entry level, lower paid jobs. Statistics from the ONS show that the average public sector pay is £629 a week, compared to £653 a week in the private sector.

Conference believes that these pressures on young mothers has an impact on their ability to participate fully in the workplace, including activism within UNISON.

Conference believes that better pay and terms and conditions (especially around flexible working) and fully funded childcare provisions from government would go a long way in alleviating these pressures on young mother's and would give them more time, resources and opportunities within their workplace and careers. Conference believes that this would not only be beneficial to the individual but would also positively impact our public services.

Therefore, Conferences asks that:

1. The National Young Members Forum (NYMF) works to actively support UNISON's pay campaigns, to encourage young members to engage and participate in ballots;
2. Regional Young Members groups work with Regional Women's groups to promote the work of the self-organised groups (SOGs) and encourage member and activist participation within their groups;
3. The NYMF supports UNISON's campaigning on government funding of childcare for working parents;

4. Regional Young Members groups work with branches and activists to support young member activists, to ensure that they can continue participation within UNISON and its structures.

*Northern Region*

## **YOUNG MEMBERS AT THE FOREFRONT OF GREEN UNISON**

Conference notes a report commissioned by UNISON has revealed that UNISON members are much more worried about climate change than the average UK worker, with 95% of members saying they are concerned about climate change compared to only just over three quarters of the wider sample.

Conference notes that although more than 17,000 UNISON members work in direct environmental roles, all UNISON members and public sector workers see the effects of and are impacted directly or indirectly by environmental change.

Conference notes that around 8% of the UK's greenhouse gases are directly emitted by public services (excluding public transport), however with the influence the public sector has on procurement, construction, social housing and more, that the impact is in reality bigger.

Conference therefore believes that our workplaces are key places to start tackling climate change.

Conference believes that Young UNISON members will increasingly be affected by climate change and are therefore at the forefront of tackling the climate emergency.

Conference notes in a 2021 report by Bupa, 64% of surveyed 18-to-22-year-olds consider it important for employers to act on environmental issues, and 59% would remain longer with responsible employers.

Conference believes that by campaigning on green issues within the workplace, UNISON will be able to improve the Public Sector's carbon footprint and help shape its future to secure good quality, environmentally sustainable jobs.

Conference also believes that as the climate emergency and Green Agenda are important issues to young workers, by raising the profile of UNISON's Green campaign, this issue could be used to recruit, retain, and develop young activists within UNISON.

Therefore, Conferences asks that:

1. The National Young Members Forum (NYMF) campaigns to raise awareness of UNISON's "Green UNISON" campaign amongst young members, with an aim to increase the number of young members trained as Green Reps within their branches;

2. Considering the motion passed at National Delegate Conference this year “The Climate Emergency Post COP27 and Decarbonising UK Public Services”, the NYMF work alongside the National Executive Council (NEC) where appropriate, to achieve the aims of the motion;
3. Regional Young Members groups work with Green networks within their regions to support the development of these networks and to ensure that Young Members are involved and are at the forefront of campaigns within their region;
4. The NYMF works alongside the NEC, regional young workers groups, young members officers and activists to continue to promote UNISON’s net zero report.

*Northern Region*

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Conference recognises the provision of free bus travel to under-22s in Scotland as a key milestone towards encouraging sustainable safe travel for young workers, and how important affordable and safe public transport is to local communities; the wider economy and the environment.

Conference accepts that the provision of affordable and safe public transport needs to extend further- noting that another key example of this is the recent introduction made by the German government of a subsidised €49/month public transport ticket.

Conference notes that ScotRail was nationalised in 2022 and that the UK Government operates and has ultimate control over all franchised rail services in England.

Conference recognises the various initiatives by devolved governments to create integrated regional public transport networks, including the South Wales Metro in Wales and the Bee Network in Greater Manchester.

Conference is also horrified by the planned closures of thousands of ticket offices by the UK Government, and recognises the vital role ticket offices play in allowing equity of access to our rail system.

Conference also notes that there are currently campaigns across the UK to improve safe travel for young workers, especially those working unsociable hours and that the ultimate responsibility for the safety of these workers lies with the UK Governments and Employers.

Finally, Conference notes that the decarbonisation of transport has been named as a priority by both the Scottish and UK Governments.

Conference calls upon the National Young Members’ Forum to:

1. Lobby the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments for the introduction of free bus travel for all under-30s, akin to an extended YoungScot scheme and; for the introduction of free public transport for all modes, including rail and ferries;
2. Lobby all stages of government and transport watchdogs for a service that meets the needs of young workers' through the provision of:
  - a. High, appropriate and reliable service frequency, including during unsociable hours;
  - b. City and region-wide integrated public transport networks consisting of all relevant modes, with uniform ticket cost regardless of mode.
  - c. Ticketing changes that promote:
    - i. Distance based ticketing,
    - ii. Flexible tickets for trips,
    - iii. Cheaper monthly passes and,
    - iv. Singles costing 1/2 of the price of return tickets.
3. Survey Young Members on their use of public transport and how much it costs them in an average month;
4. Launch a national campaign for safe and sustainable public transport for all young workers, regardless of the hours they work.

*Scotland Region*

## **SUPPORTING MEMBER PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE INCREASED USE OF HYBRID ARRANGEMENTS AT NATIONAL YOUNG MEMBERS CONFERENCE**

Supporting member participation through the increased use of hybrid arrangements at National Young Members Conference

This conference welcomes the use of hybrid meeting arrangements for young members across UNISON and recognises that hybrid arrangements have improved participation and activism.

Conference is aware that many young members live and work in remote locations with poor access to public transport links. The cost-of-living crisis and low wages also means that car ownership is not always possible and coupled with the impact of car travel on the environment, this mode of transport restricts the attendance for many young members at conference.

For some of our members travel can mean the difference between having their voice heard and being forgotten and left behind. Further, members can be prevented from physically attending conferences due to their physical or mental health capabilities or finding the time away from other commitments whether that be work, childcare, or caring responsibilities.

Conference believes that hybrid arrangements at National Young Members Conference would provide flexibility for members to choose their mode of attendance. Whether attending conference in person or virtually, delegates can tailor their experience to fit their preferences and schedules. This added flexibility allows for increased attendance rates and maximizes the impact of the conference.

This Conference calls upon the National Young Members Forum to:

1. Research the feasibility of holding the UNISON Young Members conference 2024 via hybrid means;
2. Support young members by developing and introducing more interactive online experiences such as the use of online tools, live polls, etc;
3. Lobby the NEC to research the feasibility of holding hybrid conferences at all UNISON national conferences.

*South West Region*

## **YOUNG MEMBER'S PAY AND STUDENT DEBT**

The cost of living crisis, exacerbated by Truss' disastrous economic reforms, poses a unique set of challenges for young people. In local government, social care, education and other public services, years of underfunding have led to young members facing year-on-year pay cuts, meaning that young members are entering the workforce worse off and worse paid than ever before. In conjunction with this we face skyrocketing food inflation, bills and rent. Many of us are saddled with student debt we can never pay off. This means that many of our young members are using food banks and living in poverty.

Young members in our union face more precarious working conditions, worse contracts and a worse deal than in decades. This year, thousands of our young members voted in favour of strike action over pay. However, our unions remain shackled by decades of anti-trade union laws, constricting our ability to fight effectively for improved pay and conditions.

At last year's conference, Jon Richards' opening remarks recognised the unique challenges faced by our young members, those challenges are even more prevalent today than 12 months ago and show little sign of slowing. Our union needs to rise to face those challenges, as a campaigning and fighting union.

This conference, therefore, resolves:



1. That for all future national pay ballots to bring together a group of young members (whether from branches, regions or national bodies) to produce leaflets, posters, videos and social media content specifically relevant to young members, as well as aiming to recruit young members to become active reps in their branch;
2. To work with UNISON's Labour Link to call on the Labour Party to repeal all anti-trade union laws in order to allow our young members to fight for a better deal;
3. To work with UNISON's labour link to call on the Labour party to take decisive action against the housing crisis by bringing in rent controls and committing to build new affordable homes and retrofit existing homes to improve energy efficiency;
4. To work with the Student Cost of Living Campaign, which apprentices and students on workplace placements can take part in, to continue to campaign for free education and immediate support for issues facing students in the cost of living crisis inside and beyond the National Union of Students;
5. To call on the National Executive Council (NEC) to reaffirm and step up their campaign to increase the minimum wage and abolish age-based differences within minimum wage legislation;
6. To call on the NEC to work with service groups in order to reaffirm and step up campaigns to 'organise the unorganised', particularly students on placements, apprentices and those on zero hours and/or precarious contracts, all of whom are disproportionately young people.

*Greater London Region*

## Could Place the Union in Legal Jeopardy

### RADICAL CHANGE IN THE RENTED SECTOR

Conference notes the significant impact of insecure housing on young people and the urgent need for radical change in the rented sector. The private rented sector (PRS) constitutes the most precarious form of housing – it is within this sector that rents are highest, and the quality of accommodation is lowest. Young people are more likely to live in private accommodation than any other age group in the UK which places them at greater risk of experiencing insecure, unaffordable, and poor-quality housing.

Workers' struggles and tenants' struggles are intrinsically linked, with those in precarious work more likely to be impacted by precarious housing. A recent survey of UNISON members found that those on low pay were most at risk of destitution due to rising housing costs. This is an issue that disproportionately impacts young members, many of whom are on low pay.

Not only do private tenants face greater housing costs in proportion to their income than those in other tenures, but they are more likely to struggle to afford these costs. The financial burden our members in the PRS face is unsustainable, with almost a third spending 60% or more of their total household income on housing. The quality of housing is also a concern for private tenants, with disrepair and poor maintenance most prevalent in the PRS.

Home ownership is often presented to young people as the end goal and the only alternative to renting privately. Despite this, home ownership is increasingly inaccessible for young people which forces them into insecure private tenancies. We must consider an alternative narrative that campaigns for truly affordable housing for people – not private profit, and the significant expansion of social housing provision nationally.

Conference recognises the significant work carried out by tenants' and community unions across the UK: as we organise in our workplaces, we must also support tenants organising within their communities. These unions successfully campaign and organise around key housing issues while simultaneously providing member representation to secure material improvements for private and social tenants alike.

Conference instructs the National Young Members' Forum to:

1. Establish connections with tenants' and community unions regionally, including (but not limited to): ACORN, CATU, Greater Manchester Tenants' Union, Living Rent and London Renters' Union;
2. Work alongside tenants' and community unions regionally to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, including through the delivery of workshops and training sessions for our members on topics related to housing and tenants' rights;

3. Promote affiliation with tenants' and community unions to branches as a means of further supporting members with housing issues;
4. Lobby to include as part of UNISON's housing campaign, a comprehensive system of rent controls for the private rented sector and the significant expansion of social housing provision, and to ensure young members' voices are well represented on housing issues;
5. Ask the National Executive Council to include the promotion of tenants' and community unions as part of UNISON's housing campaign nationally.

*Scotland Region*

## **HEALTHCARE FOR YOUNG TRANS, NON-BINARY AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE**

Conference commends UNISON's trans equality campaign and the work advocating for the rights of our trans, non-binary and gender diverse members. The trans ally training has been essential to providing UNISON members with practical tips on how they can be good allies in the workplace, with many young members engaging with the sessions.

However, many young UNISON trans, non-binary and gender diverse members are feeling the effects of a healthcare system that fails to meet their needs. In 2022, Reuters led an investigation into the state of healthcare for trans young people. Their investigation uncovered that, in most cases, there is a three-year wait for trans youth to receive healthcare with the National Health Service (NHS) in England. The report asserts that this is much longer than other services aimed at young people, for example services to treat eating disorders and mental health support.

Although there has been promises of radical change by NHS England, implementation has been very slow. The Cass review, an independent review of the gender identity services for children and young people for NHS England, has been ongoing since Autumn 2020. It will help inform new services in the future. However, the timetable for the final report is not yet known. Following advice from Dr Cass (of the Cass review), NHS England set out plans in July 2022 to set up new hubs for trans healthcare around England to replace the Gender Identity Development Service in Tavistock. While Mermaids, the charity for trans youth, have praised the announcement, they are concerned that waiting lists are still growing with more trans, non-binary and gender diverse young people turning to private alternatives out of desperation. Even NHS England recognises that all new services will require investment to deliver an expansion in service provision given the very large increase in referrals and very long waiting times for the initial assessment of children and young people experiencing gender incongruence.

Conference believes that trans, non-binary and gender diverse young people deserve better. With young trans members currently dealing with long wait times for healthcare and as a union that represents NHS workers, UNISON needs to advocate for a better standard of care for young trans people.

Conference calls on the National Young Members Forum to work with the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus committee to:

1. Highlight the current situation with trans, non-binary and gender diverse healthcare in the United Kingdom through the trans equality campaign and trans ally training;
2. Continue to support and promote the work of charities that work with trans youth, such as Mermaids and Gendered Intelligence, to UNISON members;
3. Update the UNISON factsheet 'Just Good Care' to reflect the current situation of trans healthcare.

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

## **THE HOUSING CRISIS AND THE IMPACT ON UNISON YOUNG MEMBERS**

Conference is appalled at the housing crisis in the UK and notes the results of the 2020 UNISON national survey which stated:

1. 61% of members were struggling to manage their housing cost.
2. Almost 1 in 3 of respondents said that the cost of housing is making them look outside their public sector roles.

Conference further notes that the cost of living has risen and that rents have been rising even faster since 2020.

Recent statistics from the charity Shelter state:

- a. That the number of Section 21 eviction in court proceedings has more than doubled in a year (116% rise), from 1,045 households between Jan and March 2022 to 2,252 between Jan and March 2023.
- b. that 172 private rental families are given a section 21 eviction notice every day.
- c. That a quarter of private renters in England (25%) have not asked their landlord for repairs to be carried out or conditions to be improved for fear of being evicted.

Young members are at the forefront of the housing crisis and as a result many have joined the housing union ACORN who help and support renters through

unfair and unlawful practises from landlords. ACORN supports young people to achieve a reasonable and safer housing arrangement that is fit for human habitation.

In the South West region there is a severe shortage of homes available for young members and it was reported by the Guardian in 2022 that there was 12000 registered second homes and yet 20000 people waiting to be housed across the UK.

Conference welcomes the support provided by ACORN to young people affected by the housing crisis and calls for the National Young Members Forum to:

- i. Work closely with ACORN in their campaign to support more affordable, fairer and safer housing for young people
- ii. Lobby the National Executive Council to explore how UNISON can further support young members to access advice and support from ACORN.

*South West Region*

## **Not Competent**

### **62 YEARS TOO LONG – END THE US BLOCKADE OF CUBA**

This conference notes that 2023 marks the 62nd anniversary of the US blockade of Cuba which is still in place despite 30 United Nations General Assembly votes calling for it to end. It is the longest economic blockade in history, has cost the economy more than 1,300 billion dollars, and causes shortages across all sectors of society in Cuba.

We recognise the increased hardships that Cubans face following the intensification of the blockade by President Trump who introduced a further 243 extra sanctions and measures, most of which remain in place under Joe Biden.

We note the COVID-19 pandemic the US blockade added to the suffering and loss of life on the island by preventing purchase and delivery of vital PPE equipment and medicines to treat patients. It also delayed the roll out Cuba's vaccination programme. In 2021, international development agency Oxfam released a report calling for an end to the blockade and stated that "seeking to provoke hunger, especially during a global pandemic is unjust and immoral."

Cuba was added to the US's "State Sponsors of Terrorism" (SSoT) list in 2021 by Donald Trump. Biden has not removed this designation, despite indications throughout his presidency that he would turn away from Trump's extreme anti-Cuba positioning as well as the lack of a clear reason to keep it there. The Cuban people are already suffering under a 60-year-plus blockade. The SSoT designation has far-reaching consequences that contribute to shortages of daily necessities such as fuel and medicine, inhibit humanitarian aid, discourage financial transactions and trade, to name only a few.

Despite this we congratulate Cuba on its development of two vaccines and the full vaccination of over 90 per cent of its population despite the severe shortages caused by the blockade. We applaud Cuba's efforts to ensure vaccine equity with its offer to make Cuban vaccines available at solidarity prices to low income countries, and we praise the heroic contribution of the 4,700 members of Cuban medical brigades who volunteered in 45 countries to help treat COVID-19 patients during the pandemic.

This conference believes that the US blockade is detrimental to the lives of all Cubans and especially the most vulnerable in society and support efforts to campaign for it to end.

We therefore resolve to:

1. Encourage branches to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign
2. Actively encourage regions to send young members to Cuba on the Young Trade Unionist May

3. Support UNISON & Cuba solidarity campaigns initiatives

*North West Region*

**END THE INEQUALITY – ORGANISING APPRENTICES FOR THE LIVING WAGE**

This conference notes that apprentices are dedicated, key workers across the public and private sector that make massive contributions to the economy of the country. Through learning professional skills, training and crucially working extremely hard across many sectors, their role entitles them to good conditions at work and a proper living wage.

We recognise that currently, however, the £5.28 hourly minimum wage for apprentices is nowhere near a living wage. It remains starkly below the £7.49 minimum wage for those 18 and over, and

£10.18 minimum wage for those 21 and over. This wage disparity makes it near impossible for key apprentice workers to afford basic necessities like food and rent, particularly during this acute inflationary crisis raising prices on all items and services.

We note that this current disparity means apprentice workers are forced into harsher conditions on all fronts. Through the use of apprenticeships as a method to cut costs through using more cheap labour to apprentices having to take second jobs to earn enough to afford the cost of living, it has become an unfair scheme whereby both the "earn" and "learn" parts are increasingly impossible.

We recognise too that apprenticeships are used heavily across UNISON's main organisation places in the public sector, particularly the NHS, and that more needs to be done to secure our members in these roles a wage they can live on. When our apprenticeship members are performing 80% of the work of our full contract members for often less than 50% of the wage, we can see this clear inequality needs redressing now.

We recognise that UNISON's density of membership among apprentices needs greatly increasing to mount effective campaigns, and that it should be a priority from national to branch level to create and bolster specific organising of apprentices within their workplaces. We also recognise that the problems above can only be solved through better organisation within our union.

This conference believes that the current apprenticeship wage is hugely harmful to the apprentices in the job and to the sectors that require their skilled work to function, and that it is a necessity for UNISON to better its efforts in our sectors to change this.

We therefore resolve to:

1. Back a full mapping exercise to properly identify density of apprentices and organise targets for new Apprentice members, with that information shared with relevant regions and branches
2. Work with branches to organise more effective recruitment strategies specifically targeting apprentices, visiting workplaces and open days to sign up members
3. Focus a union-wide campaign yearly around National Apprenticeship Week to advertise more effectively to so far uncontacted apprentices
4. Create Regional Apprentice Working Groups to coordinate this campaigning, made up of apprentice members and region/branch young members officers

*North West Region*

## **BUILDING ON THE AGE CHANGE FOR AN INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY**

Conference celebrates the passing of the National Young Members' Forum (NYMF)'s rule change at National Delegate Conference 2023, which raised the age cap for young members from 27 to 31, and notes that this has approximately doubled the number of UNISON members eligible to take part in young members' democratic structures. Conference expects that this development will enable the NYMF and Regional Young Members' Forums (RYMFs) to support and empower a greatly increased young activist base at branch level, which should contribute significantly to successful implementation of the Organising to Win strategy.

Conference agrees that, in order to fully enjoy the benefits of the rule change, we must ensure that our young members' forums remain open, dynamic and truly democratic structures which are inclusive of all young members. Conference emphasises the need to combat gatekeeping and cliquish behaviours, which have a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of organising as well as on individual members' experiences. Conference notes with regret that many young members have experienced gatekeeping from older branch officers as an obstacle to getting more involved, and notes that similar problems can arise within young members' structures.

Conference recommends that the NYMF work with the National Executive Council (NEC) and other relevant bodies to develop and promote guidance, and take any other appropriate measures, to combat gatekeeping within branches. Conference further recommends that the NYMF examine a variety of proposals, such as introduction of term limits for young member specific posts, in order to determine whether such measures would help to promote inclusivity and avoid cliques or individuals becoming dominant within young members' democratic structures while maintaining necessary flexibility.



Conference notes the pressing need to further encourage and support the participation and development of young Black, disabled, LGBT+ and women members at all levels within our union. Conference further notes the importance of effective mentoring, including peer mentoring, in developing confidence, leadership skills and organising expertise amongst our young members. Conference recognises the need for appropriate support and safeguarding measures to ensure that union activities are safe and accessible for all our young members.

In this context, Conference calls on the NYMF to:

1. Review the state of young members' democratic structures, in consultation with RYMFs;
2. Draw up proposals for any suitable initiatives, campaigns, materials, or further rule changes relating to democracy, inclusivity and safeguarding;
3. Work with the NEC, the National Black Members' Committee, the National Women's Committee, the National Disabled Members' Committee, and the National LGBT+ Members' Committee to develop on the proposals where relevant;
4. Encourage RYMFs to implement young members' mentoring programmes on a regional basis, and look into creating a unified national programme for mentoring.

*National Young Members' Forum*

## Requiring a Rule Change

### **UNISON YOUNG MEMBERS SHOULD BE RECOGNISED AS A SELF-ORGANISED GROUP**

UNISONs current publication “Organising for Equalities” was published in 2014.

The intro written by former UNISON General Secretary, Dave Prentis states “UNISON is committed to achieving equality for all” and yet the word Young is only mentioned twice.

The intro goes onto state “Self-organisation brings together members from certain groups that face discrimination”.

Conference notes that young people are a group that faces discrimination that is particular to them.

On the UNISON website it states “People may be discriminated against because of their age. Young people may experience age discrimination by being belittled, passed over for jobs or being paid poor wages just because they are young”.

Conference notes that age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

The UNISON web page on member groups states “Equality is at the heart of UNISON. We challenge discrimination and win equality in the workplace and beyond. Everyone shares responsibility for equality in UNISON.”

Conference notes that UNISON has a long and proud history of fighting discrimination.

UNISON has taken great strides in recognising the importance of Young Members in UNISON and has strengthened its organising capacity, by changing the rules to allow Young Members to organise and hold their own conference and by extending the age limit of Young Members to 31.

There is no allowance for branch based young members groups. This is allowed within the UNISON rule book for SOGs and this means SOGs can send motions to branches. This limits the organising capacity of young members and infringes upon our democratic rights within UNISON.

Therefore, Conference calls on the National Young Members Forum to:

1. Consult UNISON branches, SOGs and Young Members on the best way that Young members in UNISON should be allowed to organise;
2. Recommend a rule change that means Young Members are listed in Rule D 5.1 with the current SOGs (Women Members, Black Members, Disabled Members and LGBT+ members).

Depending on the result of this consultation, Conference then calls on the NYMF to consider submitting a rule change motion to National Delegate Conference to make Young Members a SOG in line with Rule D5

This motion is not about a desire to criticise or limit the strength of the current four SOGS, but instead about how we can work better as a union to achieve real change for all.

*Eastern Region*

## **BRANCH REPRESENTATION AT YOUNG MEMBERS' CONFERENCE**

Conference notes the positive step forwards for Young Member representation following the 2019 decision to allow Young Members our own policy making conference, but there is more work to be done in order to align ourselves with the rest of the union.

All other conferences allow for Branch representation and Young Members' conference is the only conference that doesn't allow for Branch representation which, under the current rules, limits delegations to a maximum of 10 per region, and with the recent rule change raising the age ceiling up to 30 effectively doubling the numbers of young members in the union, 10 delegates per region simply isn't representative any more.

Conference also notes the further limitations on the submission of motions as the only submitting bodies can be Regions, National Young Members Forum and Self Organised Groups meaning there is a maximum of 34 motions to be debated at any given Conference, which may create barriers to the discussion of motions addressing the impact of national occupational and industrial issues on young members as preference may be given to motions of regional priority.

Conference understands the concerns of the National Young Members Forum surrounding Branch representation at conferences that smaller Branches may not have active Young Members Forums and budgetary issues preventing the attendance of delegates from those Branches, and asserts that this issue is reflected across all Self Organised Groups yet allowing Branch representation remains the standard practice for the rest of the union.

Conferences instructs the National Young Members Forum to consult young members on the following:

1. Allowing representation from Branches at conference in line with other Self Organised Group conferences and fulfilling rule D 6.2.5 in its entirety. Allowing branches to submit motions to conference.

While also maintaining regional delegations of up to 10 and to encourage regional forums to prioritise delegates from smaller Branches

Conference also asks the National Young Members Forum to:

- a. Liaise with UNISON's conference team and other relevant staff about the feasibility of this change and report back to conference, proposing a change to the Young Members Conference standing orders if appropriate
- b. Encouraging branch young member officers to write to the National Executive Committee in support of these changes in order to encourage young members activities at branch, regional and national level.

*East Midlands Region*

## **Withdrawn by Submitting Body**

### **PEER MENTORING FOR YOUNG LGBT+ MEMBERS**

Conference commends the campaign by the national Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) members committee on engaging young LGBT+ members. We have now over 100 members part of this network and we are growing!

As part of this campaign, the national LGBT+ committee has established a mentoring programme, where members of the national LGBT+ committee mentor members of the young LGBT+ network. This is going well and is invaluable to supporting young LGBT+ members. It is helping us to develop experience and understanding of UNISON structures, which can be complicated.

However, peer mentoring would also help to empower us and to build up confidence.

Why is this needed?

Young LGBT+ members in UNISON are underrepresented. Work has already been done with the setting up of a WhatsApp group for young LGBT+ members and regular Zoom meetings. Peer-to-peer mentoring would establish better communication of the network and help to further develop activists and build their confidence. It would also encourage young LGBT+ members to put themselves forward for positions at branch, regional or even national level.

Conference, while knowledge imparted from the mentor in the current mentoring programme is valuable, it does not always correlate with the lived experience of young LGBT+ members. Young members are more likely to identify with those around their age and feel comfortable discussing ideas within their own age group.

Peer mentoring would also allow the young LGBT+ member network to communicate better with each other. As the network members are from all around the UK, apart from the WhatsApp groups and the caucus meetings at conference, the network members do not have much interaction with each other. This would foster better working relationships within the network so it can grow and work more cohesively.

We call on the national young members forum to work with the National LGBT+ committee to:

1. Continue the work of the national young LGBT+ members network and promote it among UNISON's young members
2. Consider different ways to develop peer to peer mentoring within the young LGBT+ member network

3. Work with UNISON College to develop peer to peer training for those interested
4. Develop resources such as a webinar and leaflets to promote peer to peer mentoring and any successes.

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