

UNISON Annual Report 2023

RETIRED MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The National Retired Members' Committee Annual Report has now been published. Questions on the Annual Report must be submitted using the Online Conference System (OCS) by Wednesday 13 September 2023.

The report is a summary of the work of the National Retired Members' Committee since last year's Conference.

The Retired Members' Standing Orders Committee agreed to adopt the procedures agreed for National Delegate Conference with regard to the submission of questions on the Annual Report. The Standing Orders Committee believes that this process enables Conference to deal with the Annual Report effectively and efficiently and leaves more time for motions to be discussed.

Under this procedure questions on the Annual Report are now invited and will be responded to in advance of Conference. The only questions that may be put orally to the National Retired Members' Committee at Conference will be supplementary to the questions submitted under this process. It would be preferred if any supplementary questions could be submitted by Wednesday 25 September so that any additional information requested can be sought prior to the start of Conference.

The timetable for submission of questions on the Annual Report is as follows:

Wednesday 13 September 2023 Deadline for questions to be submitted through the Online Conference System (OCS).

Wednesday 20 September 2023 Deadline for responses to be submitted onto the Online Conference System (OCS).

Wednesday 27 September 2023 Preferred date for supplementary questions to be submitted through the Online Conference System (OCS).

Wednesday 4 October 2023 Platform response to supplementary questions.

General information on accessing the Online Conference System (OCS) was distributed in the Retired Members' Conference Bulletin, which is available on the UNISON website.

To submit a question on the annual report through the OCS, follow the instructions below

- Sign onto Online Conference System (OCS)
- Select National Retired Members' Conference
- Select 'Agenda'
- Select 'Annual Report Questions'
- Select question type from drop down box

- Select 'create a new question'
- Follow instructions which will give you a form to complete
- Complete form – remembering to fill in all mandatory fields
- You can copy and paste your question into the text box or type the text in
- If you want to do this in stages you can select the save choice and come back into OCS later to finish
- When you are happy with your question, select 'Submit'

If you encounter any problems, please seek assistance from your regional OCS contact (details in the Conference Bulletin) or Josie Irwin j.irwin@unison.co.uk

UNISON ANNUAL REPORT 2023

MESSAGE FROM ROSIE MACGREGOR - CHAIRPERSON, UNISON NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' COMMITTEE

Introduction

I began an eighth year as Chair of UNISON's National Retired Members' Committee in January. We represent nearly 170,000 retired members of UNISON.

In June UNISON celebrated its 30th birthday since the merger of NUPE, NALGO and COHSE. We've come a long way since then and are now the largest trade union in the UK with more than 1,253 million members of which 75% are women and nearly 170,000 retired members.

I've enjoyed attending several conferences during the last year including the National Delegate Conference in June 2023, our National Women's Conference in February 2023 and the National Pensioners Special Delegate Conference and Annual Convention in June 2023.

It has been good after Covid to return to meeting face-to-face although we must recognise that not everyone is comfortable attending large meetings or travelling on public transport, and we know that we must still be wary of Covid.

As if the pandemic wasn't bad enough, we have been faced with rapid rises in the cost of living. It has as a result been a difficult year for many of our retired members because of high inflation. We have all had to make sacrifices not least falling living standards and the high cost of fuel and food. The price of even the most basic items has increased significantly and the high cost of travel means that most people have had to make major changes in the way they live.

The retention of the Triple Lock this year did increase pension income but the State Pension still remains inadequate and fails to deliver a decent standard of living, especially for those who do not have an occupational pension – mainly women and those who were low paid. Not only is our pension the worst in Europe but future generations are expected to pay more and work harder and longer to achieve less. Everyone should have a right to a state pension that is well above the poverty line and provides dignity in retirement.

Who could have imagined, in what many regard as a relatively stable country, that we would have three different Prime Ministers in the space of one year. One unable to differentiate between fact and fiction, another whose competence to carry out the role was questionable from the start, and a third who does at least have some small trace of integrity. The Tory choices of Home Secretaries with entrenched views on migration has been equally unsatisfactory. There is a failure to understand that we need migrant workers to provide essential services and boost the economy.

We can only guess at the long-term impact will be of Covid, the high cost of living or what the future holds with wars raging in so many different parts of the world. We need

stability but at present it seems far out of our grasp. The war in Ukraine has been devastating and the brutal Russian invasion cannot be justified but it has united people from around the world in condemning the aggression, sending aid and offering homes to Ukrainian migrants.

Human rights violations by right-wing governments, oppressive regimes and religious extremists across the world have led to detentions without trial, torture and executions creating an atmosphere of fear. Increasingly restrictions have been placed on freedom of expression and on the freedoms and choices of women, not least in Iran, and more so in Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power. All this exacerbated by the effects of drought, poverty, climate change and natural disasters. Women's rights around the world including in the USA are threatened by extremism and right-wing politics. Even in the UK the government has introduced laws to prevent peaceful protest and stripped the rights of those seeking asylum. UNISON continues to oppose the annexation of Palestinian land by the government of Israel.

The local election results in May should have sent a message to our current government and to voters that there was a need for change. We will all be watching the results of the next General Election with concern and expectation.

I'm always proud of what UNISON has to offer its retired members, despite the criticism that we don't always do enough. We do listen to you and our workplan for the current year includes implementation of the Motions carried at our Retired Members Conference in 2022.

The new Interactive e-newsletter for Retired Members has been well received with some very positive comments from several retired members.

The National Retired Members Committee is currently progressing Motions carried at our last conference as well as considering effective communications with retired members. We have also set up a working group with the aim of reviewing how we do things and how we can make improvements to do things better.

Delegations from Retired Members attended the National Delegate Conference, where we made our voices heard by speaking in a variety of different debates affecting retired members as well as supporting young members who are the future of our union. Our representatives also attended the Self Organised Group Conferences. Reports are attached at the end of this report.

POLICIES

THE RISING COST OF LIVING

The Tory government promised it would stabilise the economy, yet the level of household debt currently exceeds 2 trillion pounds and is rising. Too many of our retired members are finding themselves in financial difficulties. Those with mortgages and other loans will be hard pressed to repay them without suffering even greater hardship as the Bank of England raises interest rates to the highest levels seen in two decades.

The high cost of food and energy is causing problems for us all but those retired members who still have mortgages and those living in rented accommodation are being especially hard hit. There are threats that the cost of gas, electricity and water will rise again this winter.

UNISON's There for You, our Welfare Fund, can help those retired members who are in financial difficulties and there is money saving advice on energy efficiency and debt.

NATIONAL CARE SERVICE

The UNISON campaign for a national care service is welcomed and something that UNISON Retired Members fully support. Many vulnerable people and their relatives have been getting a poor deal since councils in England began commissioning social care from private companies. These too often place profit before providing adequate care and exploit a workforce paid poverty wages whilst working long hours without proper training.

The obvious solution is a properly funded national care service that will provide quality care to all those who need it and has national terms and conditions of service for those who deliver that care. We must campaign for a society where care workers are treated fairly and our elderly and disabled can live with dignity.

It is absurd when there are increasing difficulties in recruitment and retention of care workers that many over-stretched and demoralized staff are forced into leaving their jobs to get better pay filling shelves or working at the checkout in supermarkets.

It is a scandal that our government fails to ensure sufficient funding for NHS and Social Care and chooses to ignore the plight of those in need of care and those hard-pressed care workers endeavouring to deliver it.

We must applaud those care workers who have fought hard, including taking strike action, to achieve improvements in their terms and conditions. Such as those in Liverpool who secured the Foundation Living Wage for all those care workers in the private sector commissioned by Liverpool Council.

NHS

The NHS celebrated its 75th birthday on 5 July but there really wasn't much to celebrate. Nye Bevan's core principles that healthcare should meet the needs of everyone, free at the point of delivery, regardless of means, has been severely eroded. We continue to challenge the underfunding of the NHS and the continued ethos of privatisation at all costs by the current government. There is no doubt that privatisation of public services putting profit before people simply doesn't work and nowhere has this been better demonstrated than within the NHS.

We have highlighted the health inequalities and disparity of life expectancy in the most deprived areas and continue to campaign for no return to austerity, for proper investment in our public services including public health and for services to be brought back in-house.

We have significant concerns over the Health and Social Care Act which introduced Integrated Care Systems to replace clinical commissioning groups in 42 areas of England. UNISON is campaigning to prevent any unwanted consequences of this legislation including our concerns that contracts could be handed out without proper scrutiny. Something of which we were only too aware from the knee-jerk reaction by the government to the pandemic. The British Medical Association has raised concerns that staff shortages across the NHS and Social Care providers will limit any chance of improvements to health that might have resulted from this legislation. There simply aren't enough staff and the workforce is in crisis.

UNISON is campaigning to bring back outsourced cleaning and catering staff back in-house and has been successful in the North Middlesex University Hospital and Barts Health NHS Trust in London.

AN INDEPENDENT OLDER COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND

We established policy at our last National Retired Members Conference calling for an independent Commissioner for Older People. Someone with official powers to speak up for and promote the rights of older people as well as influence government policy to meet our long-term needs and aspirations. Surely we deserve it and we are working with the National Pensioners Convention and other organisations to persuade the government of the necessity.

RETIREMENT AGE

The government may have delayed proposals to increase state pension age to 68 but we can't be complacent as it remains a serious threat. A cynical proposal to save money. The government idea of linking pension age to average life expectancy doesn't make sense because average life expectancy varies depending on where you live. A variation of up to 20 years between the poorest and most affluent areas. Many will die before being able to draw their pension because instead of life expectancy increasing it is now in decline. Perhaps that's the government plan!

How realistic is it to expect everyone to continue to work when they are in their late 60s with the same ability or enthusiasm as their younger colleagues especially those who are in demanding physical jobs.

Our working members today are the pensioners of tomorrow. We all deserve a long and happy retirement.

ANTI-TRADE UNION LEGISLATION

The government's continued attacks on trade unions and restrictive legislation have made undertaking industrial action even more difficult. We must defend the right to strike. Many retired members have joined working members in protesting against the government's new anti-strike legislation.

Through its campaigns and commitment, UNISON has undertaken strike action and secured improvements to pay and conditions for many working members including those whose jobs are essential to the well-being of older people. Showing our solidarity is one

of the key areas where retired members can remain active by assisting in campaigning, attending rallies and visiting picket lines.

MIGRANT WORKERS

We have always challenged extremist views on immigration. We must not forget that the NHS and Social Care rely on migrant workers. The government proposals to limit immigration overall are having a disastrous impact on service delivery. We lack sufficient workers in the UK to carry out the tasks previously carried out by migrant workers. This has placed increased pressure on the NHS and social care services as well as on food production, hospitality, building trades and manufacturing. UNISON has provided advice and support to those threatened with deportation or gaining settled status.

The Home Office proposals to irradicate what it considers to be illegal migration by asylum seekers are costly, ill-judged and cruel. They clearly breach the most basic human rights. Forced repatriation, relocation to countries such as Rwanda or migrants by detained in inappropriate locations including offshore barges or redundant army camps without access to work, shops or social activities simply won't work. The proposals will allegedly cost more than £6 billion over 2 years. The aim apparently is to deter those that government ministers regard as economic migrants from entering the country. These refugees have undertaken desperate journeys, have been abused and victimised by smuggling gangs, to get to a country they thought would welcome them. The absurdity of it all is that some of these refugees are the very people with the skills we need in our workforce.

THE WINDRUSH GENERATION

22 June marked the 75th anniversary of the arrival of HMS Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks in London. The Windrush Generation made an outstanding contribution to our country, not least within the NHS that was created in the same year. Apart from experiencing racism and discrimination on arrival the Home Office repaid them in 2017 by suggesting that some were illegal immigrants despite them having lived and worked here legally for many years. Some lost their homes and livelihoods, and some were deported because they Home Office had destroyed their records which made it hard for anyone to prove they had arrived here legally. The Government subsequently apologised and established the Windrush Compensation Scheme but many are still awaiting compensation.

YEAR OF THE BLACK WORKER 2023

UNISON has designated 2023 as the Year of Black Workers during which it has celebrated achievements in black workers rights, highlighted the changes that are still required and the need to challenge racism. It is a cause for concern that we aren't attracting more retired black members to take an active role in our retired members organisation.

HOUSING

Everyone deserves a decent home and housing remains a campaigning priority for UNISON.

There is insufficient specialist housing available to meet the needs of an ageing population, fewer affordable homes, hardly any social housing. We are facing the worst housing crisis for generations made worse by the rapid rise in interest rates affecting mortgage repayments. The severe lack of social housing and high mortgage costs mean that private landlords can charge high rents, sometimes for inadequate, unsafe and poorly maintained buildings.

Rent arrears and evictions are rising at an alarming rate with many pensioners struggling to pay the rent. Many pensioners encountering poverty, insecurity and an uncertain future. The current downturn in the over-inflated housing market might be considered a good thing by some but falling house prices are now leading to fears of negative equity and repossessions.

Six years on from the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy which exposed the massive failures in safety in high rise residential buildings very little is being done to rectify the type of defects that were identified at Grenfell.

RECRUITMENT

Whilst UNISON is the UK's biggest union, we must not be complacent. It is important that we recruit new members. The number of retired members is only increasing by a small number at the present time. We need to encourage more working members to join us on retirement if we are to continue to be an effective campaigning organisation.

NATIONAL PENSIONER CONVENTION (NPC)

The 2023 Annual Convention was held in Blackpool over two days in June and preceded by a one-day Special Delegate Conference which agreed a new constitution to take that organisation forward to meet the many challenges we face at the present time. I am currently President of the NPC and UNISON is well represented by retired member activists on its various committees and working parties where we make our voices heard and work together on shared campaigning issues.

UNISON's Head of Social Care, Gavin Edwards, was one of the keynote speakers at the Convention and he spoke persuasively about our current campaign for a National Care Service. The National Pensioners Convention has its own similar campaign for a national care service.

We also heard from the Digital Poverty Alliance and Age UK who can assist those who are excluded from the internet because they cannot afford broadband or a computer and don't have the skills or ability to access the digital world. Digital inclusion is essential if older people and those with disabilities are not marginalised in a society that excludes those who are unable to access health care and other essential services, make payments, shop on-line and complete forms to claim benefits.

PENSIONERS' ORGANISATION

The National Committee continues to work with the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), Scottish Pensioners Forum and Age UK in campaigning on behalf of older people. I continue to represent UNISON on a number of NPC committees, Linda Richards from South East Region is Deputy General Secretary of NPC, and Martin Gallagher from Northern Ireland represents us on its Health and Social Care Working Party. Graham Wilkin from Northern Region represents us at Age UK.

TUC PENSIONERS COMMITTEE

The Committee meets twice a year at Congress House with catch-up meetings using a virtual platform more regularly. The committee provides a useful dialogue between the different trade unions, our various campaigns and to share information. We have also received regular updates on TUC policy. It is important that we continue to make sure our voice is heard on the TUC Pensioners Committee and raise the issues that matter.

COMMUNICATIONS

The National Committee continues to work to improve communications with retired members. An electronic newsletter for UNISON retired members has replaced the Interactive Newsletter discontinued in 2011. I think many of our retired members will be reassured that we now have a publication dedicated to our retired membership. Whilst it will only be possible to publish it in an online format and twice yearly, I hope it will prove worthwhile in providing relevant information about the key issues affecting UNISON retired members as well as updates on our campaigns.

We continue to look at ways of improving communications but often we have to rely on hard pressed and overworked Branch Secretaries to forward information.

We must ensure that our achievements are reported in UNISON publications at national, regional and branch level. We know we still have much to offer our union by assisting in campaigns and we must be given a voice.

CONFERENCES

Linda Richards and I represented the National Retired Members Organisation at the National Delegate Conference in June together with retired member representatives from each of the UNISON regions.

Linda Richards and I represented the National Retired Members Organisation at the Women's Self-Organised Group Conference in February.

Carol Sewell and Parmodh Sharma represented the National Retired Members Organisation at the Black Members Conference in January.

Kevin John Perkins and Janne Cassidy represented the National Retired Members Organisation at the LGBT+ Conference in November.

PRIORITIES

Our priorities as ever are to campaign for the things that are vital to us as pensioners,

not just for ourselves but for future pensioners.

This is why it is so important during our annual Retired Members Conference that we reconsider our policy priorities for next year.

We have the opportunity as our conference ends to take forward two motions to National Delegate Conference 2024 that we consider most important to us as retired members.

I don't want to influence delegates but would ask that consideration is given to the Motions that contain issues likely to be prioritised as important to both working and retired members as these will be more likely to be heard at next year's National Delegate Conference.

THANKS

I would like to record my thanks to members of the National Committee for their support and contributions during the last year.

The National Committee would like to thank the retired member activists in branches and regions for their hard work in pursuit of the interests of our retired membership.

Finally, a very special thanks to our previous National Officer Colin Derrig who retired during the year; Josie Irwin, Head of the Equality Unit and Gloria Orosungunleka from the Equality Unit and all those members of staff who have worked on retired members issues to ensure that our policy decisions are taken forward and that our conference runs smoothly.

Rosie MacGregor 2023

REPORT OF NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' COMMITTEE

During the last year representation on the National Retired Members' Committee (NRMC) consisted of the twelve members from the regions as follows :

Rosie McGregor (Southwest- Chairperson), Andrew Coburn (Eastern), Sandy Jones (Yorkshire & Humberside), David Humphreys (West Midlands), Barbara Fulton (Scotland), Martin Gallagher (Northern Ireland), Nick Read (East Midlands), Irene Humphreys (Cymru/Wales), Richard Mann (Greater London), Linda Richards (South Eastern), Michelle Le Marinel (North West) and Graham Wilkins (Northern).

The NEC on the National Retired Members Committee were represented by Edwin Jeffries(Deputy Chairperson) , Maureen Le Marinel and Diana Leach

Sheila Crosby(Yorkshire & Humberside) , Val Graham(East Midlands) Maureen Vass(Northwest) and Stuart Etheridge (West Midlands) who stepped down earlier in the year. Substitute Nick Read(East Midlands) and Roger Bannister (North West)

A big thank you to the present and past committee members and the NEC members mentioned above for all their hard work and contributions to the National Retired Members Committee.

In addition to the two NRMC delegates (Rosie MacGregor and Linda Richards , 11 regions out of the 11 out of the 12 regions were represented at National Delegate Conference held this year in Liverpool as follows:

Andrew Coburn (Eastern), Sheena Gordon (East Midlands), Greater London(Mary) Rose Reynolds (Northern Ireland) Roger Bannister (North West) Barbara Fulton (Scotland) Jeff Derham (South East) Elizabeth Payne – Ahmadi (South West) Stuart Etheridge (West Midlands), Kevin Swift(Yorkshire & Humberside)

The involvement of our delegation sends a message to other parts of the union, that retired members are part of UNISON. Retired members participated as per usual in a number, of debates, which included speaking to support the issues of concern to their working comrades.

During the past year the Retired Members Organisation continued to work successfully with the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) who are expedient campaigning partners.

RETIRED MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

The Retired members has been growing year on year from 166653 in 2022 to 167892 this year.

UNISONS LGBT+ CONFERENCE – 18-20 NOVEMBER - REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES The delegates representing the Retired Members ' Organisation were Kevin Perkins (Islington Local Government) Janne Cassidy

UNISON DISABLED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE, 29-31 OCTOBER 2022- REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIVES

The delegates representing the Retired Members' Organisation were Rosie Jackson and Howard Beck.

The Disabled Members conference took place in Brighton. I attended on behalf of the Retired Members Organisation and the Deaf Caucus.

It was brilliant, conference and everything went smoothly. The conference delegates debated motions which will form the right policies to make sure workplaces treat workers fairly in terms of providing services for disabled members in the workplace and retired members access to local public services.

There were Caucus meetings as follows: Black, LGBT+ , Women and Deaf. The debates were on serious issues effecting the rights of disabled people in the UK. There is a huge problem in this country with which we need to fight against the cuts and for the rights of disabled people to make sure they are treated fairly and to make sure that the impact of the cost of living , low employment of disabled people and the cuts in services in local communities are stopped and things are improved within local communities and workplaces for our members and for society has a whole.

UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS 18 OCTOBER CONFERENCE 2022 – NOTES OF LGBT+ CAUCUS /NETWORK MEETING

National Retired Members' Conference - LGBT+ members caucus/network Meeting 18th October 2022 Telford International Centre

- Meeting agreed Stuart Etheridge (West Midlands) as Chair and Kevin Perkins (Greater London) to produce the report of the meeting to national Retired Members' Committee.
- Meeting noted that Jan Cassidy (Havering) and Kevin Perkins (Islington) would be the Retired Members' representatives to the National LGBT+ Conference in November 2022.
- Meeting paused to mark the passing of Sue Salzedo, long-time LGBT+ activist and advocate for this caucus at the end of last year. She will be missed.
- Chair asked if anyone had any comments on the arrangements for the meeting. From the ensuing conversation, the following points arose:
 - It was felt that the layout of the room for the meeting (top table & rows of chairs facing it) was too formal. Members would like future meetings to be held in the round where it would be easier to see speakers faces.
 - It was felt that only allowing 30 minutes for the meeting was hardly a commitment to Self-Organised Groups (SOGs) inclusivity as it limited opportunities to present ideas and develop arguments.
 - Longer time was needed between caucus meetings. The timetable did not allow for the possibility of a meeting overrunning, nor did it consider access needs of members with mobility issues moving from one caucus venue to another.
- Motions on the Agenda. Bob Deacon (Wolverhampton) highlighted motions 16 (Equality Liaison Committee) and 17 (Retired Members at Self Organised Group Conferences – Six Years On). It was noted that in the Annual Report there was nothing about LGBT+ equality or any other equality issues. The two motions would assist in rectifying this deficit.
- Motions not admitted to the Agenda. Discussions centred around the West Midlands' motion "Trans Equality in Retirement – Louder and Prouder" (printed on pages 57/8 of the final agenda).

It was explained that the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) reasoning appeared to be that Trans Equality is an issue for all parts of the trade union movement and that trans people are not treated any differently in retirement. Quite how and by what evidence SOC had come to the latter conclusion had not been imparted to the submitters of the motion...

The meeting noted that West Midlands continues to appeal this decision and it was agreed that should SOC remain unmoved caucus members should move reference back of the relevant section of the SOC report.

- The meeting was also concerned that there appears to be no mechanism within Standing Orders whereby a caucus can make its feelings on a matter known. Whilst the Trans Equality motion itself was the property of the proposer (West Midlands), the caucus felt that, as a Self-Organised Group, we had a legitimate interest in this issue and that we wished to voice the caucus' concerns to SOC.
- The meeting further noted that under current arrangements for National Retired Members' Conference – and unlike other UNISON conferences – there is no provision for any SOG caucus to submit motions or amendments in their name. Members decided to explore ideas for overcoming what was seen as an Equalities Gap within the National Retired Members' Organisation.
- The meeting felt strongly that SOC cannot define what issues should (or should not) be important to SOGs.
- Rainbow lanyards and Trans Equality badges were distributed to members to strengthen the visibility of the caucus at Conference
- Noted that the final agenda for LGBT+ Conference was due to be published on 21st October.
- Trans Ally training is being rolled out across UNISON regions. The meeting trusted that retired members would be included in this programme.
- Members exchanged information on agencies/groups they knew of which supported older LGBT+ people and their ageing needs. Organisation referenced included Age UK Opening Doors and Safer Ageing. Members to investigate the possibilities of inviting organisations to have stall at conferences/events.
- Members felt strongly that SOGs and Equalities groups need to be visible to each other rather than think in silos. Members felt that the National Retired Members Committee should take action to ensure an Equalities/Diversity table at future conferences prominently located and staffed.

UNISON NATIONAL BLACK MEMBERS CONFERENCE, 20-22 JANUARY 2023 – REPORT OF THE RETIRED MEMBERS REPRESENTATIVES

The Retired Members Organisation was represented by Carol Sewell and Parmodh Sharma

Reflections of Unison Black Members' Conference by Parmodh Sharma, Retired Members Delegate.

The Unison Black Members' Conference 2023 was held between 20-22 January 2023 at Edinburgh International Centre to discuss share and hopefully send the message to remind those in position of influence that enough is enough, and that racism and racist discriminatory practices are not accepted. My first impression of the conference agenda was that it was a very full busy agenda for a well, run and organised conference highlighting/campaigning on issues impacting Black members of staff in their everyday lives. I had attended a Black Members' conference some 20 plus years previously which had left an utterly disappointing experience for me as valuable platform time was being scoundrel by minority of black members to disrupt the proceedings to the point that our delegation left the conference before the end!

The conference 2023 was encouraging and refreshing. The agenda tackled wide range of issues that impact members in their everyday lives.

The Conference topics debated included: Mental health and Young members; Impact of Cost of Living; Opposing Nationality Bill; a motion called for black staff to be treated with Dignity and Courtesy by addressing individuals by their correct names. There were other motions of interest to include wider membership. There also was contributions by well-known people of knowledge and interest in Black affairs this injected real energy and dynamism to the proceedings.

Recognizing that one of UNISON's main aims is to ensure equality of treatment and fair representation for all members and to work towards the elimination of discriminatory practices based on race, gender, sexuality, gender identity, disability, age or creed. Various motions from the committee and membership addressed areas of everyday concern. It was good to observe good participation from the floor.

This year is UNISON's Year of Black Workers so that unfair treatment can be challenged on the on-going and timely basis to achieve equality of treatment.

I attended Black caucus meeting and shared matters of common concern.

UNISON NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE , 16-18 FEBURARY 2023 - REPORT OF RETIRED MEMBERS REPRESENTATIVES

The Retired Members' Organisation was represented by Rosie MacGregor and Linda Richards (National Retired members Committee)

Women's Conference was held in Bournemouth from Thursday afternoon to Saturday lunchtime. Comprising four conference sessions, service group, regional and caucus meetings plus seminars, hustings, and fringe meetings.

It was especially good to meet several retired members attending the conference as visitors.

There were 39 Motions on the agenda of which 14 were grouped debates relating to the Cost of Living Crisis and 2 were composited, the first on Domestic Abuse and the second on Defend the Right to Choose. 5 Emergency Motions were submitted but these were ruled out of order as not competent or failing to meet the criteria for a genuine emergency.

There were three women guest speakers - UNISON President Andrea Egan who spoke of a broken UK society, Christina McAnea, General Secretary who said that women in the trade union movement had broken down barriers and changed women's lives and Bridget Phillipson MP Shadow Secretary of State for Education who said that the current government failed to understand that children and families need to be at the heart of government policies.

Debates centered on a number of key issues affecting women including increasing participation by lower paid women in our union, the cost of living crisis, fair and fast compensation for WASPI women, the gender pay and pension gap, work life balance, sexual harassment, domestic abuse, young women's mental health, the menopause and perimenopause, and the importance of women becoming health and safety reps.

There were many excellent debates and the speakers were knowledgeable and supportive of each other, especially when women told their personal stories of adversity and abuse.

Rosie MacGregor spoke in two debates, the first on Women and the Cost of Living Crisis speaking of the impact on women pensioners. Subsequently speaking on the Gender Pay Gap she stated that the income for women pensioners is disproportionate to that of men, almost half by some estimates due to the disparity in earnings and that many of our low paid members have to rely on the meagre state pension when they retire. She asked conference not to forget about our retired women members.

Rosie attended the Health and Safety Workshop.

A bucket collection raised £592.93p for There for You, our welfare fund.

UNISON NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE, 13-16 June 2023

UNISON's National Delegate Conference was held in Liverpool in June. The National Retired Members delegates were Rosie MacGregor and Linda Richards from the National Retired members Committee plus representatives from each of the 12 regions.

It was a welcome return to Liverpool for our conference. We are in Brighton next year.

There were as ever lively debates with some passionate speeches and a few that were contentious including one that went to a card vote. There was a long list of Fringe events. There were some good policy decisions and overall, it was an interesting and worthwhile conference.

The National Retired Members delegates were Rosie MacGregor and Linda Richards from the NRMC plus Retired Member representatives from each of the UNISON regions. Our retired member delegates spoke in many of the debates and made our voices clearly heard on a diverse range of subjects and managed to influence decision in at least one debate.

We stood at the start of conference on the Tuesday morning in a mark of respect for all those members and activists who had died during the preceding year.

Our **UNISON President Andrea Egan** opened conference saying she was “very proud to offer you a warm welcome here to the North West, the biggest of our union’s regions”. She went on to say she was proud to be leading a union fighting to end in-work poverty and fighting for dignity. Andrea continued by speaking of the injustice of racism and inequality as well as the need to stand in solidarity with international trades unions. Closer to home she spoke of harm caused by the cost-of-living crisis and 13 years of Tory austerity. Her chosen Presidential charity is Endeavour based in her hometown of Bolton that provides support for domestic abuse survivors.

The Annual Report was carried with ease and we heard that our finances are in relatively good shape.

After the President’s speech on Day One **Motion 5 “Increasing participation of Lower Paid Women in Our Union”** was carried without opposition.

The keynote speaker that afternoon was Professor Lynn Sudbury-Riley from Covid Bereaved Families for Justice spoke of the impact of her own father’s bereavement and the importance of the Inquiry and why it is necessary to understand the implications of so called “Partygate”. **Motion 13 “A Health and Safety Response to a National Crisis of Stress and its Effects on Public Service Workers”** followed with moving speeches about the huge impact of Covid on our members and the need to acknowledge the mental and physical toll.

The first of our Retired Member representatives to speak was Roger Bannister, North West Region on **Motion 22 “Tackling Health Inequalities and Closing the Life Expectancy Gap”**. Roger spoke effectively about the links to social deprivation and that the low state retirement pension putting older people at risk of discrimination. It was carried as amended by 22.1.

The remaining Motions heard on the first day were all carried. **Motion 1** as amended by 1.1 **“Organising to Win – Building Workplace Power through Participation”**; **Motion 4 “Equality is UNISON Business”** as amended by Motion 4.1 and 4.2 moved by Rosie MacGregor saying that a negative narrative surrounds older people. We suffer from ageist jokes, are barred from certain activities because we are told we

are too old, ageist attitudes pitch young against old, attacks are made on our pension entitlements, we sometimes feel invisible and we may no longer feel valued; and **Motion 17 “Defend the Right to Strike”**.

The first Motion on Wednesday **Composite A “Social Care Crisis – The Urgent Need for Reform and Increased Investment”** included our own Motion 29 on this subject. It was moved by Rosie MacGregor stating that it remains a scandal that in one of the richest countries in the world politicians fail to provide proper funding and ignore the plight of those in need of care and those who deliver it.

This was followed by **Motion 28 “A Vision for a National Care Service”** in which Kevin Swift the Retired Member representative from Yorks and Humberside spoke with feeling and the motion was carried unanimously. **Motion 27 “Radical Change in Social Care in Wales Can Influence the Whole of the UK”** was then carried.

Our **General Secretary Christina McAnea** gave an inspirational and very personal speech to close conference on Wednesday morning. She opened by stating “What a year we’ve had” and went on to list our achievements and spoke of the commitment of those who have attended picket lines, rallies and campaigns across the country often braving freezing weather to stand up for our rights to fair pay and conditions. She received several standing ovations for a heartfelt speech.

The first controversial debate was on Wednesday afternoon **Composite D “Industrial Action Ballots”**. It was clearly lost but not without a good debate and some rancour but **Motion 79 “Taking Effective Action within the Straightjacket of Anti-Union Laws”** was then carried. The issue being the difference between the urgency of the latter and the potential delays in a need to gather evidence in the former.

Motion 8 “Harassment – It’s Not Part of the Job” as amended by 8.1 was carried easily that same afternoon. Rosie MacGregor spoke in the debate in support of Young Members stating that it is shocking in supposedly more enlightened workplaces that sexual harassment, bullying, racism and violence, which should have been banished to history, are still happening in the 21st century.

Sheena Gordon Retired Member representative from East Midlands referred to her “boys”, her son and his male partner, of whom she was immensely proud in the debate on **Motion 57 “Make 2024 the Year of LGBT+ Workers”**.

On Thursday morning we considered International Issues and at the opening of conference we received a video message from **Turkish Trade Union Leader Gonul Erden** who was only recently released from prison in Turkey. She said that her “main strength comes from solidarity from comrades like you.” This was followed by an impassioned speech from **Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary Public Services International** calling for global solidarity to defeat the rise in “far right populism” which was met with a standing ovation.

Liz Payne-Ahmadi, Retired Member representative from South-west region spoke with passion in both the two following debates. Both motions were carried **Motion 69**

“Defending and Improving Women’s Rights Internationally”; and Motion 72 “We Need to Talk About Palestine”.

Thursday afternoon is always Rule Changes when the decision whether to support or otherwise can depend simply on one word. There were fewer amendments to rules to consider this year, but it was not entirely straight forward.

Regrettably our proposed rule change Rule D National Executive Council had been ruled out of order by Standing Orders Committee. We appealed the decision but without success. See our reasons for the appeal:

National Retired Members Committee (NRMC) consider that the Standing Orders Committee is wrong in their belief that this proposed rule amendment conflicts with Schedule C for the following reasons:

- 1. Schedule C specifies the powers of the NEC to set the schedule for elections i.e. the timescales, process for inviting nominations, format for election addresses etc. Schedule C does not address representation on the NEC.*
- 2. This amendment (to rule D) seeks a change to representation on the NEC to include retired members. It does not seek to change any aspect of the election process (dealt with by Schedule C). The amendment therefore does not conflict with Schedule C.*
- 3. Rule D 2.5 sets out the representation for young members seats. Ruling out this amendment from NRMC, which seeks similar representation for retired members, is inconsistent and discriminatory.*
- 4. SOC’s decision discriminates against retired members, it is treating retired members unfavourably in comparison with the self-organised groups and young members, even though age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.*

Rule Amendments carried:

2 – Rule D Young Member’s Seat

Rosie MacGregor spoke supporting this rule change to increase the age limit from 27 to 30 years for young membership in line with TUC and most other unions.

5 – Rule G Branch Meetings

7 – Rule G Branch Officers

8 – Rule G Branch Secretary

Rule Amendments lost:

1 - Rule C Honorary Life Members

Both Rosie MacGregor and Roger Bannister spoke against this rule change on the grounds that the wording was confused, and the intention was unclear. It was lost overwhelmingly.

3 - Rule D Service Groups

There was time for several motions following the Rule Change debates.

Motion 84 as amended by 84.1 “Effective Use of Our Union’s Resources to Build our Industrial Action Fund and Capacity to Deliver Effective Industrial Action” proved the most controversial and resulted in a Card Vote because of the implications of the transfer of excess funds from branches to boost the national Industrial Action Fund. The result was 488,528 For and 498,199 Against.

Linda Richards spoke with feeling on **Motion 44 “Crisis in the NHS and Social Care”** which was carried unanimously.

Kevin Swift spoke on **Motion 45 as amended by 45.1 “Integrated Care Systems”** about major concerns we have about this government legislation and lack of scrutiny.

The final day arrived all too quickly with many important motions unheard. Some of our retired representatives were keen to speak but had not because the question was put before they had the opportunity.

Rosena Allin-Khan, Shadow Minister for Mental Health gave an inspirational speech on Friday morning. She spoke of her experiences of working in St Georges Hospital, Tooting during the pandemic and of the crisis in mental health, inequality and the true scale of Tory mismanagement. Our workers are a force for good and that is why the trade union movement is so vital.

There was a standing ovation when **Dr Neville Lawrence**, father of Stephen, was presented with Honorary Life Membership. He spoke of the support he had received from the trade union movement in the battle for justice for the murder of his son.

We then debated **Motion 78 “The Northern Ireland Peace Process 25 Years On”** which was clearly carried. Tina Roche the retired member representative from Northern Region spoke on **Motion 20 “Cost of Living”** saying that the threat of poverty is as real today as ever with rapidly rising debt and the future for many insecure. This and the following motions **Motion 38 “Private Renters Deserve the Right to a Secure, Decent and Affordable Home”** and **Motion 53 as amended by 53.1 “Ethnicity Pay Gap”**.

Roger Bannister gave a well-considered speech as part of **Composite C “Defend Our Right to Vote – Voter ID is Suppression”** stating that voter ID is a conscious effort to disenfranchise working class voters. Composite C was carried.

We moved on to **Re-Prioritised Motions** on Friday afternoon but there were no further speakers on behalf of retired members. **Motion 54 “2023 Year of the Black Worker”**, **Motion 52 as amended by 52.1 “Cost of Living Crisis and Black Workers”**, **Motion 25 “Defend Abortion Rights”** and **Motion 56 “Securing the Legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers”** were all carried. Everything else on the re-prioritised list was referred to the new NEC.

The **President Andrea Egan** who had chaired conference so well was given an incredible send off. Even John McDonnell MP came!

On the Fringe

Our representatives attended numerous different Fringe Meetings and Rosie and Linda and others attended the International Rally on Tuesday evening and Rosie and

others attended the Labour Link Fringe Meeting where Angela Rayner was the principal speaker.

Conclusion

Our retired members showed that we remain a strong force within our union. Unafraid to stand up and make our voices heard and influence the union. After all we have the skills and knowledge gained when we were working members.

Our thanks to all our delegation.

ACTIONS TAKEN ON MOTIONS CARRIED AT THE 2022 UNISON NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

COMPOSITE A - COMPOSITE A. OLDER PEOPLE AND THE

GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO THE ENERGY AND COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Composite has been referred to the NEC's Policy Development and Campaigns Committee

MOTION 1 OUR NHS. PRIVATISATION BY STEALTH

The National Retired Members Committee (NRMC) is working with Labour Link, NEC, NPC and the Health Service Group Executive to campaign for comprehensive health care for older people.

MOTION 2 THE BUS PASS IN ENGLAND

The issues contained in the motion have been raised with UNISON's Transport Service Group. NRMC will participate in a bus campaign with the National Pensioners Convention 1-8 October 2023

MOTION 4 THE UK STATE PENSION

See Motion 11 for action

MOTION 6 HEAT OR EAT?

Issues discussed in this motion have been raised with the TUC and the NRMC is involved in ongoing campaigning on the cost of living.

MOTION 7 THREAT TO FREE PRESCRIPTIONS

The Government has confirmed that those aged 60 and over in England will continue to have access to free prescriptions despite a 2021 consultation that recommended raising the free prescription threshold to meet the state pension age at 66.

Pharmacy minister Neil O'Brian said "cost-of-living pressures informed the government's decision to keep the prescription exemption where it is".

MOTION 8 WIDESPREAD DISRUPTION OF HEALTHCARE DURING THE PANDEMIC

This motion has been referred to the NEC's Policy Development and Campaigns Committee.

MOTION 9 THE COST -OF LIVING RISE AND ITS IMPACT ON OLDER PEOPLE

NRMC discussed this motion with the Energy Service Group and were advised UNISON Energy Group, have been arguing for a public ownership approach to energy retail for a few years now, and this is the Service Group policy.

The view is that the most effective way in which an energy supplier could address fuel poverty and ensure consumer costs are affordable is by increasing investment in energy efficiency. The Retired Members Committee will continue work with the energy group to support any campaigns and push for the investment in energy efficiency.

MOTION 10 CARD ONLY TRANSACTIONS AND ACCESS TO CASH

NRMC is campaigning with NPC on this matter.

MOTION 11 TRIPLE LOCK

Due to the triple lock being reinstated this year no further work was carried out but the NRMC will continue to work with NPC to campaign to legislate to ensure that the inflation determinant in future is RPI rather than CPI.

MOTION 12 FREE TV LICENCE FOR THE OVER 75 -YEAR- OLDS

The Motion was referred to the PDCC as specified in the motion. The Government has not accepted statutory responsibility for the continued provision of free TV licences to all over – 75s.

MOTION 13 POVERTY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Motion has been referred to the NEC's Policy Development and Campaigns Committee.

MOTION 14 THE URGENT NEED FOR REFORM AND INCREASE INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL CARE

The National Retired Members Committee(NRMC) submitted a motion to the 2023 UNISON National Delegate Conference to campaign for improvements to social care for older people.

MOTION 15 SCORES ON THE DOORS

This motion has been actioned with the results of the ballot being published on the retired members' section of the website.

MOTION 16 EQUALITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

The lack of representation of retired members on the Equality Liaison Committee has been raised. Discussion continues.

**MOTION 17 RETIRED MEMBERS AT SELF-ORGANSIED
CONFERENCE – SIX YEARS ON**

Discussion on whether, or not submission rights to SOG conferences would require a rule change continues.

MOTION 18 MORE CONSISTENT SUPPORT FOR RETIRED ACTIVITY

The National Retired Members Committee(NRMC) working group conducted a survey on support for the retired membership. Results are being analysed and NRMC will consider a report of findings.

**MOTION 19 NOW IS THE TIME – A COMMISSIONER FOR
OLDER PEOPLE**

UNISON supports the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) working with Age UK, the Centre for Ageing Better and Independent Age in their campaign for England to have an Older People Commissioner and UNISON retired members attended a Parliamentary event along with other unions, campaign groups MPs and Peers to find out more about the campaign.

MOTION 20 CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION

The first electronic newsletter for retired members in UNISON was published and launched in June . The Newsletter will be one of the means of communicating with retired members.

The newsletter will be published three to four times a year.

The National Officer is reviewing and updating the Retired Members section of the website and will include Retired Members Campaigns.

The Older People Charter is in the process of being updated with a working group set up at updating changes to the charter and other publications.

MOTION 21 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The National Pensioner Convention (NPC) held a public transport conference which was attended in June by many, UNISON Retired members. Petitions from the RMT were circulated to UNISON members to stop the closure of ticket offices around the

country. The Retired Members will continue to work with UNISON WET Service Group and the National Pensioners Convention on their current campaigns. The NPC agreed to launch a national Better Buses campaign and to seek support from local, regional, and national organisations.

The Retired Members Committee will be supporting and will work closely to assist with the campaign action week which they are working towards launching a week of action from 1-8 October.

MOTION 24 WE MAY BE GONE, BUT DON'T LET US BE

FORGOTTEN – U MAGAZINE, LACK OF COVERAGE OF RETIRED MEMBERS ISSUES

The issue was raised with communications and Retired Members Committee were informed that the print version of U-Mag was discontinued due to an NEC decision at the end of last year. The last issue went out in February. See also Motion 20.

MOTION 26 OLDER PEOPLE SHOULD'T HAVE TO CHOOSE

WHETHER TO HEAT OR EAT

The National Retired Members Committee is promoting the Northern Ireland campaign and sharing developments with other regions.

MOTION 27 RULE D- STRUCTURE OF THE UNION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The Retired Members Organisation submitted the Rule amendment contained in motion which was considered for National Delegate Conference business .

MOTION 29 RETIRED MEMBERS' REPRESENTATION ON

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

This motion was submitted to the 2023 National Delegate Conference and was ruled out of order.

MOTION 30 SOCIAL CARE

UNISON launched its campaign Let's make care work – together we can make care work earlier this year. It includes a petition asking all MPs to introduce a national care service. Retired members across all regions are engaged with this campaign.

UNISON joined the Fabian Society to launch the first ever roadmap to a national care service at an event in Westminster in June 2023.

MOTION 31 INTERGRATED CARE SYSTEMS

The National Retired Members Committee is liaising/ and working with the National Pensioners Convention and will work with Labour Link to stop any consequences of the changes to the Government's new Health and Care Act which has introduced integrated Care Systems (ICS) into the 42 areas of England.