

**2023 National
Disabled Members
Conference Final
Agenda**

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28 Oct 2023 30 Oct 2023

Recruiting, organising, representing, and retaining members

1. RECOGNISING DISABLED MEMBERS

Conference believes that the work of individual Disabled Members in UNISON needs to be recognised.

UNISON currently has lots of different awards for members including the Learning Initiative Award and the Organising Rep of the Year Award.

Young Members have the Young Member of the Year Award which recognises a Young Member who has made a difference in campaigning, organising or promoting Trade Union values and ideas in the workplace.

Black Members also have the Nelson Mandela Award which is given to those who exemplify Nelson Mandela's values of determination, a desire for unity and strength in the face of injustice.

Yet despite 2022 being the Year of Disabled Workers and assurances from reps on the National Disabled Members Committee (NDMC) we still don't have an award that recognises the important contribution Disabled Members play in our union, in workplaces and in wider society.

UNISON has some amazing Disabled Members. People who have made a real and lasting difference to the lives of disabled workers and disabled people and it is time for them to receive the recognition they deserve.

Conference we need to establish a Disabled Member of the Year Award. An award should be given each year to a Disabled Member who has dedicated time and effort to campaigning for disability equality, tackling disability discrimination and inspiring disabled people to achieve their goals. This could include work in UNISON, in the workplace or in society.

Conference instructs the NDMC to work with the NEC to:

1. Establish a small working group to agree the criteria and nominating and judging process for the Disabled Member of the Year Award.
2. Launch the award at National Delegate Conference 2024.
Present the first Disabled Member of the Year Award at National Disabled Members Conference 2024.

Newcastle City

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

1.1

Insert new paragraph five as follows:

“LGBT+ members have the annual LGBT+ Recruitment and Organising Awards. There are two awards, one to a region or caucus and one to a branch. The awards go to groups of members, rather than individuals, to recognise that our union is about working together.”

In seventh paragraph at end of first sentence insert “and a region, caucus or branch of the year award”. At end of paragraph insert “A separate award should go to the branch, regional disabled members group or national disabled caucus that has best advanced disability equality in the workplace in the previous year, in terms of organising, recruiting, bargaining and campaigning.”

At end of action point 1 insert “and the branch, region or caucus of the year award.”

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

1.2

Insert new 7th paragraph as follows:

“Our disabled members are also very diverse. They are Black and disabled, disabled women, LGBT+ and disabled, low paid and disabled, Deaf BSL users, or all of these – the list goes on! It is important that when we celebrate our members we do so in a way that also celebrates our diversity and takes into account UNISON’s commitment to proportionality and fair representation.”

At the end of existing paragraph 7 which starts “Conference we need to establish” insert new paragraph as follows:

“Conferences believes that it will be important for any award to fully reflect the diversity of our disabled members and for any working group to itself be reflective of our diversity.”

In action point 1 after “small” insert “and diverse” and at the end of this sentence insert “and ensure diversity, proportionality and fair representation is taken into account in all decision making.”

National Black Members' Caucus

2. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND YOUNG WORKERS

Conference notes the important work done by the National Disabled Members Committee in developing and promoting the 2019 ‘Let’s be reasonable’ report which showed the difficulties faced by many disabled workers in securing reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Conference also welcomes the wide range of bargaining guidance, information and resources available to UNISON representatives wanting to negotiate stronger policies on reasonable adjustments in their workplaces. Great strides have been made in implementing initiatives such as ‘reasonable adjustment passports’, meaning that reasonable adjustments are assessed and identified

once and travel with the worker, rather than a new assessment being made every time a worker changes job or workplace.

However, many workers still experience unacceptable delays and difficulties in accessing necessary adjustments, and young workers may have even more difficulty in accessing reasonable adjustments due to various factors:

- a. a lack of information about their rights under the Equality Act 2010 to request reasonable adjustments.
- b. a lack of information as to what adjustments may be available and schemes such as Access to Work.
- c. a lack of confidence in requesting adjustments.
- d. precarious or short-term job contracts where employers may not be responsive to requests.

Conference believes UNISON representatives play a key role in supporting workers in accessing the reasonable adjustments to which they are entitled, and UNISON branches are able to make great improvements for disabled staff by negotiating robust policies on disability and reasonable adjustments.

Conference asks the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Continue to campaign for stronger rights to reasonable adjustments including time limits to respond to reasonable adjustments requests, time limits to implement these and the wider adoption of 'reasonable adjustment passports' by employers.
2. Continue to promote and publicise UNISON's resources on reasonable adjustments, including the Know your Rights leaflet, the Let's be Reasonable report and the Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustment guide that includes examples of reasonable adjustments.
3. Work with the National Young Members Forum to publicise UNISON's resources and information on securing reasonable adjustments to young disabled workers.
4. Consider producing guidance on the right to reasonable adjustments at interview and for new starters.
5. Work with Regions, Branches and Service Groups to support and inform bargaining for a more supportive and proactive approach to disability and reasonable adjustments by employers.
6. Share best practice examples of workplace reasonable adjustments, such as reasonable adjustment passports and strong disability policies negotiated by UNISON branches.

National Young Members' Forum

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

3. LET'S RAISE AWARENESS

Conference notes the exceptional Trans ally training scheme that our union has created and delivered to many Unison members. Our Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender + (LGBT+) National committee, it's officers and the Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Diverse caucus must be applauded for the work and effort they have put into the training and its delivery.

This training has been extremely successful in informing members about Transgender issues and helping them understand the bad press the transgender community have had. Those trained gain a good understanding and can become good 'Trans allies' in the workplace.

It is a simple and effective way of delivering information and the training can be passed onto others to further increase the potential of numbers trained.

Conference it is a fantastic and effective method of raising awareness and dealing with misconceptions. The wider union gains a knowledge of the issues and can provide support and be understanding of the Trans community.

This model should be encouraged, and it is believed would be ideal to be used and adapted in relation to autism spectrum disorder (ASD). We have an increasing amount of members who identify with ASD and there is a similar lack of understanding to the issues these members face. Awareness would help other members understand the issues and assist those with ASD and help gain the appropriate advice, reasonable adjustments and allies.

Conference we believe this training should be adapted, if possible, for ASD and clearly there is a scope for other subjects to follow owing to the overwhelming success of the Trans project.

Conference calls on the National Disabled members committee to:

1. Contact the National LGBT+ committee and the Transgender, Non-Binary, and gender diverse caucus to seek advice on how they set up the Trans allies training and seek advice on what was required from the wider union.
2. Look into what is required to adapt and deliver the training including contacting the relevant groups for any funding and organising reasons.
3. Look to establish and deliver the training when possible if the actions at 1 and 2 are positive and the adaptation is possible.
4. Report back any progress to the Disabled Member conference 2024.

East Midlands Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

3.1

In the second paragraph delete "bad press the transgender community have had" and insert "systematic discrimination and harassment trans people have

faced from traditional media outlets, social media and those seeking to create hatred and division.”

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

3.2

In the fifth paragraph, first sentence, delete “autism spectrum disorder (ASD)” and insert “autism and neurodiversity”. Second sentence, delete “identify with ASD” and insert “who identify as having autism or being neurodivergent”. Third sentence, delete “with ASD” and insert “who have autism or are neurodivergent”.

In the sixth paragraph, delete “ASD” and insert “autism and neurodiversity”.

National Disabled Members’ Committee

3.3

Insert new paragraph 7 as follows:

“Deaf people are often misdiagnosed as having autism or being neurodivergent and are sent down a hearing pathway, whilst conversely other Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) users who are neurodivergent or have autism can often struggle to get assessed and to get the support they need in education or at work.

At end of action point 2 insert “, and seeking to ensure the experience of Deaf BSL users and autism and neurodiversity is included in any training.”

National Deaf Members’ Caucus

3.4

Insert new paragraph 7 as follows:

“It is important that training includes the experience of different groups. For example, many young Black boys often written off as disruptive in school, based on stereotypes and discrimination, instead of the possibility of autism and neurodiversity being considered. These young people lose out on education as a result, impacting their life chances.”

At end of action point 3 insert “, seeking to ensure the experience of Black people with autism and neurodiversity is included in this training.”

National Black Members’ Caucus

4. IMPACT OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING ON DISABLED MEMBERS

Conference is concerned that an increasing number of employers are introducing ‘for cause’ drug and alcohol testing policies without due consideration of the impact on disabled employees including our Disabled Members.

These policies allow managers to ‘ask’ any employee that they believe could be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at work to take a test. Reasons for

believing that an employee could be under the influence of drugs or alcohol include but are not limited to:

- a. Fluctuations in mood or energy or increased tiredness
- b. Frequent short-term absence with or without an explanation
- c. Taking longer to complete tasks
- d. Difficulty remembering instructions
- e. Trips, falls or stumbles
- f. Slurred speech

All of these so-called warning signs of drug or alcohol use could be disability related. For example, people with neurological conditions often experience fatigue, slurred speech or lack of balance that leads to falls.

These policies also state that if an employee claims that the reasons for suspicion are linked to their medication, they must provide their manager with a copy of their prescription. This forces Disabled Members to reveal not only that they are disabled but the nature of their condition and details of symptoms which could be quite intrusive.

If a member refuses to take a test, which they are entitled to do, they will be called into a meeting on the next working day to discuss the issue. As this is called an informal fact-finding mission, they have no right to be accompanied. The outcome of this meeting could lead to disciplinary proceedings and dismissal.

If a member agrees to take a test these are often being administered by companies that we know are unreliable. For example, we are aware of employers who are using companies where cross-contamination was found in their testing labs during COVID.

If the result of the test is positive the member could be subjected to disciplinary proceedings and dismissal. However, there is evidence to show that positive tests can be linked to prescribed or over the counter medication and, in some cases, even everyday things such as hand-sanitiser, tonic water and poppy seeds.

If a Disabled Member wants to dispute the outcome of the test, they are being told by their employers that they will need to pay for this.

Conference understands that there are some jobs, such as those that involved driving or operating machinery, where it may be necessary to carry out drug and alcohol testing, but these policies are being applied to all jobs.

The government guidance states that these types of policies should be part of a contractual health and safety policy and, as such, could be seen as a change of terms and conditions that needs full consultation.

The Health and Safety Executive recommend that these policies should only be introduced for employees who make safety critical decisions such as drivers and pilots. And the TUC has raised concern about these policies and encourages employees affected to contact their union rep for advice and support.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC, UNISON's National Health and Safety Committee and the TUC to:

1. Survey Branches to determine how many employers have introduced this type of drug and alcohol testing policy
2. Develop guidance for Branches on how to support Disabled Members who are asked to take a drug or alcohol test
3. Campaign against the introduction of 'for cause' and other similar drug and alcohol testing policies that are not based on evidential need.

Newcastle City

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT WITH QUALIFICATIONS**

4.1

At end of 3rd paragraph insert: "Some employers also base their suspicions on harmful and unfounded stereotypes of Black disabled workers."

At end of action point 2 insert ", including challenging stereotypes".

National Black Members' Caucus

Negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members and promoting equality

5. PROGRESSION FOR ALL - BLACK DISABLED WORKERS CAN'T BE LEFT BEHIND

Conference notes that despite the significant numbers of Black workers in the frontline work force, they are disproportionately underrepresented in managerial and senior levels within their departments and tend to be concentrated in the lower levels.

Some commentators point to the ways in which institutional racism continues to play a key role in Black workers' experiences in the organisation, which means they are often overlooked for development opportunities.

In terms of career progression, evidence points to continual barriers for Black workers to progress to middle and senior management roles within their teams or organisations. This particularly impacts those on fixed-term contracts, causing them to be overlooked and leading to discrimination as a significant number of Black workers are on fixed term contracts.

Every disabled Black worker should have equal opportunities for professional growth and advancement, regardless of their background or employment status within their workplace.

Conference acknowledges that it is our duty and responsibility to address these inequalities and promote inclusivity, diversity, and equality in all aspects within the workplace. We must encourage employers to recognise the immense value and unique perspectives that Black disabled workers bring to their organisation, and to foster their growth and provide equitable opportunities at work. This is crucial to creating a truly diverse and inclusive environment.

Conference believes that we need to work with employers to affirm their commitment to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and equitable workplace that values the contributions of all its workers and actively works towards the progression and advancement of Black disabled workers, including those on fixed-term contracts.

We need to take an important step towards a more just and inclusive future for our Black disabled members.

Conference notes that UNISON has produced a useful toolkit as part of the Year of Black Workers. This includes negotiating race equality guides on fair recruitment and selection, redundancy and bullying and harassment.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with regions and branches and other appropriate parts of the union:

1. To encourage employers to sign up to a comprehensive approach to addressing the barriers to progression for Black disabled workers by:
 - a. Conducting a comprehensive review of existing policies and practices related to recruitment, hiring, performance evaluation, and career development of Black disabled workers, with a particular focus on identifying and seeking to eliminate any discriminatory practices or biases.
 - b. Evaluating fixed-term contracts to ensure fair and equitable treatment, with specific attention given to the representation and career advancement of Black disabled workers in these contract types
 - c. Committing to actively combating any barriers and unconscious biases that hinder the progression of Black disabled workers including those on fixed-term contracts.
 - d. Implementing targeted measures, such as anti-bias training, mentoring programmes and leadership development initiatives, to support and empower Black disabled workers in their career progression.
 - e. Regularly monitoring and reporting diversity and equality indicators, including representation, retention, and promotion rates of Black disabled workers, to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
 - f. Adopting clear and transparent communication channels that should be established to ensure that all workers, especially Black disabled workers, are aware of available opportunities for progression,

including promotions, internal job postings, and skill development programs.

- g. Actively seeking out external partnerships and collaborations to promote career advancement opportunities for Black disabled workers, including participating in diversity job fairs, mentoring programs, interview coaching and professional networks.
 - h. Reporting their disability and ethnicity pay gaps and taking steps to ensuring fair recruitment.
 - i. Allocating necessary resources to support this work and reviewing and reporting annually to ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement.
2. To circulate UNISON's Year of Black Workers negotiating race equality guides to seek to get these issues on the branch bargaining agenda.

National Black Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

6. ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING AND ADVICE FOR WORKERS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS OR OTHER NERVOUS DISORDER

Conference, statistics published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on 26 January 2023 noted that the disability employment rate was 54.3% compared to 81.1% for non-disabled in 2021/22.

While the employment rate reduced slightly to 50.5% for those with mental health conditions, it dipped significantly to 33% for those with a mental illness or other nervous disorder, who are among those disabled people least likely to be in employment.

On average between 2014 and 2021, the ONS noted that disabled people were twice as likely to leave the workforce and three times less likely to enter the workforce, than non-disabled.

The ONS further reported that the number of people reporting a long-term health condition is rising, caused by an 83.7% rise in the number of people reporting mental health conditions (1 million). Conference notes that the ONS distinguishes two categorisations of mental health conditions: common mental health problems (which includes depression, bad nerves, and anxiety) and mental illness or other nervous disorder (which includes mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, manic depression, and other serious mental health problems).

In 2022, research published by the Mental Health Foundation and the London School of Economics and Political Science noted that mental health problems cost the UK economy at least £118 billion a year. Three-quarters of that cost was due to lost productivity of people living with mental health conditions and the costs incurred by unpaid informal carers.

According to research published by the Centre for Mental Health, mental health cost our employers £35 billion in 2016 through sickness absence, staff turnover, and presenteeism.

In 2019, a survey by the Chartered Management Institute reported that whilst most managers manage staff with mental health problems, only 49% had received relevant training. The staff they were managing had conditions ranging from some of the more common mental health issues such as depression, anxiety or stress, through to more complex mental health conditions including eating disorders, bipolar, and post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.

Conference believes employers are failing to equip managers and HR professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to support and manage staff experiencing significant mental health problems and mental illness. While many employers provide generic training on managing stress, mindfulness etc. for managers and workers, it falls short of the specific training needed to support workers experiencing more serious mental illness or other nervous disorder. Employers need to go beyond the more generic mental health awareness training provided to respond to the full scale of the issue.

Conference agrees that stewards play a crucial role in supporting their members mental health and well-being. They may be the first port of call for a member who is struggling. But they need to be equipped to support.

Conference commends UNISON for training provided on mental health, however, recognises that talking about mental health with a member can be a difficult conversation for our stewards. In part through fear of triggering negative thoughts and feelings among those members, and in part through feelings of being ill-equipped to respond appropriately and effectively. More so, when representing members with mental illness or other nervous disorder.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC:

1. To review the mental health training available through UNISON that is currently available for stewards, to assess whether it also provides our stewards the knowledge and skills needed to represent members with more serious mental illness or other nervous disorder effectively; and if not, to consider revising the training to incorporate this aspect of mental health.
2. To encourage branches to press their employer for access to a dedicated mental health practitioner who is able to offer advice and guidance to managers and HR professionals on workplace issues involving workers with mental illness or other nervous disorder, within their occupational health provision.

Scotland Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SEEK WITHDRAWAL OR
OPPOSE**

7. MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND OTHER NON-APPARENT DISABILITIES

Conference notes the survey done in 2022 by UNISON's National Young Members Forum which found that 80% of UNISON young members had experienced a mental health problem in the previous year.

Conference notes that mental health problems, like many impairments, may be non-apparent, meaning they may not conform to stereotypes of disability and uninformed employers may not respond appropriately to requests for reasonable adjustments.

Many young workers may not be aware of the full protections under the Equality Act to be protected from disability discrimination and to have reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Conference welcomes the work done by the National Disabled Members Committee in widening awareness of disability rights and supporting UNISON branches in negotiating strong policies on disability, including non-apparent impairments.

Conference asks the National Disabled Members Committee:

1. To work with the National Young Members Forum to campaign on the importance of UNISON and trade unions in securing reasonable adjustments and other support for workers with mental health problems and other non-apparent disabilities.
2. To publicise and promote UNISON's resources on mental health and other non-apparent disabilities, such as the Bargaining on Mental Health Policies guidance.
3. To work with the National Young Members Forum to inform and educate young UNISON members about their employment rights regarding all forms of disability.
4. To share best practice in negotiating policies and achieving individual support for those with non-apparent disabilities.
5. To continue campaigning for increases in mental health provision and funding on the NHS so that help is available more quickly and in more areas.

National Young Members' Forum

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

8. WOMEN AND NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Conference notes that neurodiverse women still fail to get the support they need in the workplace because of out-dated and sexist stereotypes.

Conference further notes that UNISON subscribes to the social model of disability and as such we focus on breaking down barriers and identifying ways of changing the working environment to make it accessible for neurodiverse people.

However, there is a huge lack of understanding about neurodiversity, particularly in relation to women, and there is a place for separate and specific UNISON guidance on neurodiversity in the workplace that includes the barriers faced by neurodiverse women.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Consider working with neurodiverse members to develop guidance on neurodiversity in the workplace, which includes specific reference to the challenges faced by women workers with neurodiverse conditions
2. Continue to publicise and promote UNISON's 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' guide.

National Women Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

9. SICKLE CELL DISEASE NEEDS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Conference believes that Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an impairment that must be taken seriously. SCD affects millions of individuals globally and significantly impacts their quality of life.

SCD is an inherited blood disorder that affects the production of red blood cells, causing them to be abnormally crescent-shaped and prone to blockages in blood vessels.

People with SCD experience chronic pain, organ damage, anaemia, and increased susceptibility to infections. SCD also significantly affects physical, mental, and emotional well-being, leading to limitations in daily activities, education, employment, and overall quality of life. This blood disorder is predominantly associated with people from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds.

Sickle cell anaemia requires ongoing treatment, medicines, and hospital stays. It can be so severe it prevents those with it from working. This can lead to financial struggles. Parents of sickle cell children are at risk of job insecurity and may miss out on promotion due to the amount of time needed for appointments or hospital admissions.

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone with a physical or mental impairment which has or is likely to last 12 months or more and which has a substantial impact on their normal day to day activities.

Conference notes that SCD is likely to fit the definition of a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010. People with SCD experience frequent and severe pain crises, leading to significant barriers to carrying out daily activities and

limiting their physical functioning. Chronic pain management becomes a lifelong struggle, necessitating appropriate support and accommodations to ensure a quality life.

Conference notes the impact SCD has on employment, often resulting in missed workdays due to health complications, causing disruptions in professional pursuits.

Conference also notes that there can be a lot of emotional and psychosocial challenges, such as depression and anxiety, due to the impact of the disease on physical health and overall well-being. Public recognition and support systems are essential in addressing the psychosocial needs and ensuring appropriate mental health care for individuals with SCD.

Conference notes that UNISON's guide 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' outlines the rights disabled people such as those with SCD are entitled to in the workplace. The guide also includes a section devoted to SCD and the kind of reasonable adjustments that might be applicable in the workplace.

It is crucial employers take SCD seriously to ensure appropriate support, equal opportunities, and protection against discrimination to those affected by this condition.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to work with National Black Members Committee to:

1. Raise awareness of the impact of SCD on Black workers and of the rights these workers are entitled to as disabled people under the Equality Act 2010
2. Publicise UNISON's 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' guide to branches and regions, and in particular the advice on reasonable adjustments for people with SCD
3. Support appropriate campaigns for investment and support for people with SCD.

National Black Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

10. PROSTATE PROBLEMS

Conference notes that prostate can affect more than one in three men over the age of 50. The prostate is a small gland found only in men, trans women, non-binary people who were assigned male at birth and some intersex people. We also note that data shows that African Caribbean people are more likely to get prostate cancer than white people.

The prostate gland surrounds the urethra and is about the size and shape of a walnut but tends to get bigger as you get older. It can sometimes become swollen or enlarged by conditions such as: prostate enlargement, prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate) and prostate cancer.

Conference notes that people with prostate cancer are deemed to be disabled under the Equality Act 2010 as soon as the disease is diagnosed. They are therefore entitled to reasonable adjustments which could include time off for treatment or medical appointments, reduced or changed working hours, access to toilet facilities or reductions in workload, for example.

Most people with the condition don't have any signs or symptoms because the onset is quite slow, that's why it's important to know about the risks. It is common that men will not talk about their personal issues, so we need to encourage people to get tested. It's a simple process of just talking to a nurse or GP.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Support appropriate campaigns that encourage people to get tested for prostate problems.
2. Raise awareness of the rights of people with prostate problems in the workplace under the Equality Act 2010, including by circulating UNISON's 'Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments' guide and our 'Know Your Rights' leaflet.

Hillingdon Local Government

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

10.1

Insert at end of action point 1 “, calling for communications that are fully accessible, including to Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) users.”

National Deaf Members' Caucus

10.2

In the first sentence after “prostate” insert “problems”. In the second sentence, before “non-binary” insert “some”.

After third paragraph, insert new paragraphs as follows:

“However, for trans and non-binary people, this may be even more difficult due to concerns about discrimination based on their gender identity.

Conference also notes that one of the side effects of prostate problems can include erectile dysfunction. This can in turn lead to mental health problems. Additionally, treatment for erectile dysfunction is rationed in some areas, leading to a postcode lottery and a humiliating system of having to beg for medication.

Conference further notes that those living with HIV have regular blood tests to monitor their status, and, as part of that process, are able to request that their blood is also tested for the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). This is particularly important if there has been incidence of prostate cancer in the immediate family. Monitoring through such blood tests can track the slow progress of this cancer and can ensure that any necessary treatment can be arranged at an early stage. PSA monitoring through regular blood tests is the easiest way to detect prostate cancer, and as a union, we should publicise this.”

Insert final action point as follows:

“3. Raise awareness and campaign for an end to the postcode lottery faced by those with prostate problems who need access to erectile dysfunction medication and of the availability of PSA testing for those living with HIV.”

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

11. AIR FILTER - COVID-19 WORKPLACE DISENFECTION

Conference notes that since the pandemic there has been increased focus on building standards including cleaning and ventilation. We are all aware that disabled people are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 with research revealing that 59.5% of all deaths involving COVID-19 during 2020 were amongst people who were disabled and 46% of disabled people experiencing a negative effect on their mental health.

Across the world there is numerous examples of improvement initiatives to indoor air quality to help create an environment that reduces workplace spread of Covid and other viruses such as the installation of HEPA filters or UV Disinfectant lighting. Current UK legislation is for employers to provide a safe working environment but despite all the COVID guidance there is no legal requirement to provide such systems of disinfestation to help make our workplaces even safer. Recently these devices were implemented in England's NHS so there are examples of it in use in other parts of the UK where UNISON members work.

Conference calls on the NDMC to:

1. Collate and share examples of best practice across the UK and the globe around workplace air filtration systems to encourage branches to raise the issue with their employers to introduce such devices in the workplace.
2. Raise the issue with Labour Link to campaign for a legal requirement to introduce such devices within public buildings including workplace settings.

Scottish Qualifications Authority

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

12. MAKING HYBRID WORKPLACES MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR DEAF WORKERS

Conference notes that since the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a massive shift to hybrid working, with many of our members now splitting their time between home working and the workplace.

This has resulted in benefits to many disabled workers who can manage their impairment better at home, with short breaks and more flexible start and finish

times. However, many Deaf members who are native British Sign Language (BSL) speakers face increased barriers due to online working.

In the workplace, Deaf worker should have access to a BSL interpreter who can interpret conversations with colleagues, clients, and members of the public.

However, when working from home Deaf BSL workers rely on remote BSL interpretation services and are therefore unable to receive phone calls when homeworking. Instead, calls need to be arranged in advance and the worker has to book a remote BSL interpreter and then call their colleague, client or member of the public back.

This can lead to some colleagues feeling it takes too much time or energy to arrange to speak to a Deaf BSL staff member by phone through their own language. This can lead to the worker being left out of key discussions and facing isolation from workmates and from team decision making.

Email is not a substitute because for Deaf native BSL speakers, English is a second language and emails can lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings.

Although some other countries, including the United States, have videophone relay services that allow Deaf workers to receive incoming calls that are simultaneously translated into BSL, this technology is not yet common in the UK. Some organisations individually contract with a video relay company but there is no general ability for Deaf people to be able to make outgoing calls in their own language, and this applies not just to the workplace but to every aspect of Deaf people's lives

Deaf workers also face other barriers when homeworking as part of a hybrid schedule. Online meetings require the Deaf worker to constantly focus on the interpreter or they may miss parts of the meeting, unlike hearing people who can look away from the screen and still hear what's happening. Interruptions that don't go through the chair can also be hard for the interpreter to pick up and the Deaf worker may miss out on important context.

Online meeting platforms often allow interpreters to be "pinned" but they can still move about on the screen, causing confusion and interruption to the meeting for the worker. Deaf workers can find these meetings exhausting and this can reduce their ability to participate as they would like.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Raise awareness of the barriers to communication and to taking part in online meetings that Deaf (native BSL) workers face when working hybrid.
2. Seek to update UNISON's guide to hybrid and home working to include the barriers faced by Deaf workers and ways these can be addressed by employers.
3. Support appropriate campaigns to expand government funded videophone BSL interpretation services for all.

National Deaf Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

13. USING THE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT CHARTER TO INFLUENCE THE BARGAINING AGENDA

Conference notes that UNISON Disabled Members has longstanding policy on the precarious state of employment of disabled people in the UK.

Disabled people are still less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people, and those with certain disabilities are even less likely to be in employment. Disabled people are also more likely to be employed in lower paid jobs, are more likely to be employed into roles below their qualifications, skills and experience, and are less likely to gain promotions compared their non-disabled colleagues.

Urgent action to support Disabled people in the workplace is not only necessary but is well overdue.

Conference further notes that UNISON is one of the founding members of the Disability Employment Charter, which describes a series of actions aimed at government and employers to address disability employment issues to improve disabled people's participation in the employment market and lower the persisting disability pay and employment gaps.

UNISON negotiates some of the largest collective bargaining agreements in all four nations that make up the UK. Some of these collective agreements include workforce policies and conditions of service as well as pay.

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee, taking cognisance of devolved bargaining structures where they exist:

1. To use the Disability Employment Charter to develop a bargaining campaign that regions and branches can use to incorporate relevant Charter actions within their bargaining priorities.
2. To encourage Service Groups at a national level to incorporate relevant actions of the Charter into bargaining priorities.

Scotland Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

14. NEXT STEPS FOR OUR WORK ON THE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT CHARTER

Conference is proud that UNISON is one of the founding members of the Disability Employment Charter which now has 147 organisations signed up to it, including trade unions, disabled people organisations, public service employers, charitable organisations, and private sector employers.

The disability employment charter was founded because of the disadvantage that disabled people experience in the labour market and workplaces. Disabled

people are less likely to be employed than non-disabled people, with the disability employment gap consistently at a rate of just below 30 percentage points. The employment rate of disabled people is 53% compared to 82% of non-disabled people. This is due to a number of factors including disability discrimination, failure to make reasonable adjustments, inaccessible workplaces and structural ableism.

Disabled employees also face a pay gap of almost 20% lower than non-disabled employees. On top of this, disabled people incur approximately £1000 disability associated costs which works out at about 63% of household income after housing costs, according to the disability charity Scope. The cost-of-living crisis has compounded the poverty experienced by disabled people.

The charter outlines the actions that the government needs to take to address the disadvantage disabled people encounter in their working lives asking for:

- a. all employers with 250+ employees to publish data annually on the number of disabled people they employ as a proportion of their workforce; their disability pay gap; and the percentage of disabled employees within each pay quartile.
- b. increase to disabled people's access to employment programmes and apprenticeships; increase the scale, quality and awareness of supported employment programmes and supported internships; and increase the provision of tailored careers advice to disabled people.
- c. Reform of Access to Work (AtW) including removal of the AtW support cap; ensuring application/renewal processes are efficient, personalised, and flexible; entitle disabled jobseekers to 'in principle' indicative awards; facilitate passporting of awards between organisations and from Disabled Student's Allowance to AtW; and increase awareness of AtW support.
- d. Reform of Disability Confident requiring employers at Disability Confident Levels 2 and 3 to meet minimum thresholds regarding the percentage of disabled people in their workforce; and remove accreditation from employers that do not move up within 3 years from Level 1 to Levels 2 or 3.
- e. Leveraging government procurement ensuring award decisions for all public sector contracts take into account the percentage of disabled people in the workforce of tendering organisations; require government contractors to work towards a minimum threshold regarding the percentage of disabled people in their workforce; and take failure to achieve this threshold into account in future contract award decisions.
- f. The government to require employers to notify employees on decisions regarding reasonable adjustment requests within two weeks; make the option to work flexibly from day one the legal default for all jobs; introduce stronger rights to paid disability leave for assessment, rehabilitation and training; and fund an increase in Statutory Sick Pay to the European average.

- g. The government should require employers to consult and negotiate with disabled people and their representatives on disability equality matters; and provide trade union equality representatives and disability champions with statutory rights to time off to perform their role.
- h. The government should create a 'one stop shop' portal to provide information, advice and guidance to employers on recruiting and retaining disabled people, and to disabled people on their employment rights.
- i. The government should take into account increasing disability prevalence in calculating the disability employment gap, and use the 'prevalence corrected' employment gap measure in monitoring national progress on disability employment.

The charter is primarily a campaigning tool that calls on government, rather than employers, to take the kind of legislative and cross-sectoral action that is needed to radically improve the rights of disabled people in the workplace. Employers are asked to sign up to it to show that they want government to take action and to show that they disagree with the Conservative government's usual argument that employers see stronger rights as a "burden on business" or "red tape".

However, some disabled members have reported that their employers have agreed to the principles of the disability employment charter but are reluctant to sign up as the call is on the government to take actions. It is important that we support those branches in making the argument to their employer while also seeking other ways in which the charter can be used, including when it comes to workplace bargaining.

Some disabled members report that their branches have used the employment charter as a bargaining and negotiating tool to improve working conditions for disabled members; with employers reporting on the make-up of the workforce, reporting on disability pay gaps, increasing employment opportunities for disabled people, incorporating commitments to disability equality in procurement process and providing reasonable adjustments more quickly.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Continue to promote the sign up to the disability employment charter.
2. Provide guidance to branches on the arguments to make when seeking employer sign ups and on how the disability employment charter can be adapted for use as a bargaining and negotiating tool to promote disability rights in the workplace.
3. Collate good practice of how branches have utilised the disability employment charter to improve working conditions for disabled members.

National Disabled Members Committee

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

15. MIND THE PAY GAP!

In 2022 Conference passed four motions that mentioned a pay gap, recognising that any pay gap affecting any protected characteristic is unacceptable, and change is needed. Conference recognises that the current cost of living crisis has made the issue even more pressing.

Conference accepts that since gender pay gap reporting was required for organisations with more than 250 employees there has been an improvement – from 18.4% in 2017 down to 14.9% in 2022. It is becoming clear that until organisations are held to account, they will not take responsibility, and they will not take action.

Compare the movement on pay gaps across multiple equality strands:

- a. Disability pay gap - was 12.7% in 2017, but had increased to 17.2% by 2022, meaning disabled people get paid on average £2.05 per hour or £3,700 per year less than non-disabled people.
- b. Ethnicity pay gap – was 4.2% in 2017, and had reduced to 2.3% in 2019, but this masks significant disparities with the London ethnicity pay gap standing at 23.8%, and this is likely to be reflected in other areas of the UK. It is also shameful that no more recent statistics are available.
- c. LGBT+ pay gap – there is very little official data but we know from a YouGov survey in 2019 that lesbian, gay, bi, and trans workers responding reported being paid an average £6,700 per year less than non-LGBT+ colleagues, a 16% pay gap. UNISON's experience is that trans workers are likely to be particularly impacted.

The fact is that organisations rarely collect all the data to enable them to assess the pay gap related to disability, LGBT+, and ethnicity. Workers are often reluctant to declare protected characteristics due to stigma, and the perceived disadvantageous effect on promotion or workplace development. This particularly affects disabled workers, and especially LGBT+ workers who may not be 'out' at work. Even where organisations assure workers of confidentiality to encourage self-declaration, workers are unenthusiastic. In many sectors workers have no confidence that their employer will handle that data with appropriate security and regard and may misuse it.

Conference believes that the first step to addressing the remaining pay gaps is to introduce mandatory reporting for all organisations with more than 250 workers. Conference further recognises that without the relevant diversity data, such reporting will be incomplete, and will not be robust.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Develop workplace guidance on confidential reporting of disability and related equality data, and how to protect workers' data rights.

2. Encourage regions and branches to work with their employers to negotiate to protect workers' data rights in the workplace, and to collect equality data.
3. Raise the disability, LGBT+, and ethnicity pay gaps with regions, branches and service groups so that the drivers of pay gaps can be included in local and national bargaining agendas with employers.
4. Work with signatories to the Disability Employment Charter and the TUC to campaign for all employers with over 250 employees to publish annually:
 - i. The number of disabled, LGBT+, and Black workers they employ as a proportion of their workforces.
 - ii. The percentage of disabled, LGBT+, and Black workers they employ at each level of the organisation.
 - iii. The disabled, LGBT+, and Black workers pay gap in the organisation.

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members

16. GET THE VOTE OUT TO GET THE TORIES OUT!

Conference believes 13 years of Conservative-led government have been a disaster for disabled LGBT+ people and looks forward to the opportunity presented by the next general election for the UK to kick the Tories out of government. However, despite the opinion polls, this is by no means guaranteed. We, as trade unionists, must help to get the vote out if we are to achieve it and with so many constituencies likely to be close, LGBT+ disabled people's votes will be important.

Conference believes disabled people have suffered disproportionately for several years due to cuts imposed by the current government.

Since the Tories came to power under the coalition, and later in their own right, they have systematically attacked and started dismantling the welfare state and institutions, such as the NHS, that disabled people need to live independently. Gutting Remploy: privatisation of NHS blood plasma, which was later sold on to a Chinese company; more than doubling NHS expenditure on private health providers; the Health and Social Care Act; over 40% drop in the number of Learning Disability Nurses; cuts to Mobility Allowance; and life-expectancy down, for first time in decades. This list goes on and on.

They have also abjectly failed to take any real action to ban conversion therapy, particularly when it comes to trans people, and have fed a culture war that demonises trans people, whether in workplaces or in schools. NHS waiting lists for gender identity services are massive, with many trans people still having to go private.

Conference also recalls with horror that former Prime Minister Boris Johnson was found by the Privileges Committee to have deliberately and repeatedly misled parliament about attending illegal parties during the Covid pandemic whilst so many died, with family members unable to see them one last time. There is growing evidence that some government ministers fast-tracked contracts for their friends for often unusable and unsafe PPE, whilst nurses and doctors had to wear binbags in an effort to prevent infection. All whilst the rich were helped to get richer on the backs of everyone else.

Conference demands, loud and clear, that this cannot be allowed to continue and those responsible need to be brought to account.

Yet, we cannot rely on this catalogue of doom, destruction, and despair to bring us the result our public services and disabled LGBT+ people need at a general election. Conference believes the Tories and their friends in the right-wing press will start to sugar coat recent events and the legacy of their 13 years in office. We cannot allow that to happen.

In addition to this, the Tory government have introduced changes that seem designed to suppress votes from people who might want to vote against them. The new photo identification requirements will disproportionately impact younger LGBT+ people and disabled people on low incomes, both of whom are less likely to have the required type of photo identification.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National LGBT+ Committee to:

1. Raise awareness of the continued impact of the Conservative-led government on disabled and LGBT+ people.
2. Work through the Labour Link to lobby the Labour party to seek to ensure a future Labour government fully delivers on banning all LGBT+ conversion therapy and on modernising and de-medicalising the Gender Recognition Act.
3. Work with other appropriate parts of the union to encourage disabled people to register to vote.
4. Raise awareness of the new photo identification requirements with disabled members.
5. Work through the Labour Link to encourage our disabled members, via regions and branches where appropriate, to vote in a way that supports public services, equality, and an end to 13 years of Tory misrule.

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus
National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

17. DEVELOPING UNISON'S VISION OF A NATIONAL CARE SERVICE

Conference notes:

- a. Many disabled people across the United Kingdom rely on daily care visits to maintain their independence through care visits and care packages.
- b. Although the system of requesting and agreeing a care package sits with local authorities, care packages are often delivered by the private sector.
- c. The care sector has been substantially privatised for many years, leading to a patchwork of support depending on the provider and on the postcode the person receiving care lives in.
- d. Unlike the NHS, social care is not free at the point of use. Care Needs Assessments under the Care Act 2014 are normally undertaken by the local authority, which looks at eligible needs and whether an individual meets the threshold for having a level of needs that can be supported through a care package. Many disabled people are left having to pay substantial costs for their care.
- e. Changes being proposed in Scotland under a new National Care Service (Scotland) Bill would remove responsibility for social care from local authorities, leading to a reduction in democratic control and further steps towards the commodification of care in a privatised market.

Conference believes:

- i. Care Assessments should not be about eligibility for care but focus on what support is needed.
- j. All social care should be provided through UNISON's vision of a National Care Service as a funded, universal, free at the point of delivery service that works in the interests of all; an end to private companies making profit out of care and a commitment to deliver care services primarily through local government.
- k. Fair work, decent pay and improved status should be the norm for all care workers.
- l. Our vision also needs to include how care workers are directly employed by disabled people through personal budgets these workers are incorporated in nationally agreed terms, conditions and training, while maintaining disabled people's independence and right to choose.
- m. Equality and human rights and independent living, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, should be central to the assessment and provision of care in the United Kingdom.

- n. Disabled people have a right to be heard properly during Care Needs Assessments and be actively involved in shaping their care, and support and care packages should be shaped with, not for people.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee, working with appropriate parts of the union including service groups and the devolved nations to:

1. Continue to campaign for UNISON's vision of a properly funded, free at the point of use National Care Service across the United Kingdom and in each devolved nation, and to campaign against attempts to reduce local democratic control and increase marketization of care, including supporting UNISON Scotland's campaign to have the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill withdrawn.
2. Seek opportunities to develop UNISON's vision of a National Care Service to include care workers directly employed by disabled people and a framework for a fairer assessment system
3. Encourage Regional Disabled Members' Committees to work within appropriate structures to lobby elected representatives at local, regional, and national levels to seek support for UNISON's vision of a National Care Service and more inclusive Care Needs Assessments.

National Disabled Members Committee

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

18. THE BSL GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION (GCSE): A ROUTE TO TACKLING THE DEAF EMPLOYMENT GAP

Conference notes that disabled people face barriers to employment. 2022 figures show that 53.3% of disabled people were in work compared to 81.9% for non-disabled people. This gives a shocking "disability employment gap" of 28.5%. Although official government figures do not record the employment gap for Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) users specifically, a Royal Association for Deaf People report in 2020 found:

- a. Only a quarter (25%) of deaf people said they had access to careers advice in BSL when they were at school.
- b. Over half (60%) said they had not been given progression opportunities during their career
- c. Nearly two-thirds (63%) said they had encountered barriers to career progression.
- d. 63% also felt they had not been given equal opportunities in the workplace.
- e. Just over half (53%) did not feel supported at work.

Conference notes the BSL Act 2022 which recognised BSL as a language and the subsequent introduction of a new BSL GCSE from September 2025.

Conference believes the new GCSE offers opportunities to tackle the Deaf employment gap due to the expected need for new BSL teachers.

Deaf BSL users are in a great position to be able to take up these jobs, reducing the Deaf employment gap.

However, it is not yet clear what standards will be required for BSL GCSE teachers and there is a need to clarify this and invest in supporting Deaf people to access these jobs.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Support appropriate campaigns calling for acceptable standards in the qualifications, knowledge and experience required by BSL GCSE teachers.
2. Call for government investment in training Deaf people as BSL GCSE teachers.
3. Support appropriate campaigns calling on the government's Office for National Statistics (ONS), together with national and regional employment bodies, to look at ways of adequately capturing employment data on deaf BSL users specifically.

National Deaf Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

18.1

Amendment to Motion 18 "The BSL General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE): a route to tackling the deaf employment gap

At the end of point F, after '2025' insert "in England, Wales and Northern Ireland"

Insert an additional action point 4 "To lobby the Scottish Government to introduce a similar qualification in Scotland's schools to the GCSE in BSL offered in the rest of the UK.

Scotland Region

19. DISABLED PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRAVEL TOO

Disabled people including our Disabled Members could find themselves losing their Personal Independence Payments (PIP) if they go abroad for a holiday, for work or even to visit family.

Current government guidance says PIP claimants need to inform the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) if they're planning to travel abroad for 28 days or more as this is a change in circumstances. As non-disabled people claiming Tax Credits only have to notify travel abroad that is over 8 weeks the government are already treating disabled people less favourably which is potentially discrimination.

But recent operational changes are making the situation even worse. Although the official government guidance officially refers to 28 days the DWP section of the government website states "You must contact the PIP enquiry line if you go abroad" to report a change of circumstances.

Disabled Members who have contacted the PIP helpline to tell them they are going abroad for just a couple of days have been asked personal and sensitive questions such as Where are you going? Why are you going? And how will you manage your care?

Depending on how you answer the questions you could be told you can travel or told it is a change to your circumstances. And as we know a change of circumstances can lead to your PIP being reviewed, cut, or even stopped.

The website goes on to say that "You could be taken to court or have to pay a penalty if you give wrong information or do not report a change in your circumstances."

The inconsistency in the guidance is causing our Disabled Members stress and anxiety as they don't know what they need to report and if they will be penalised for going abroad. A petition has been created on the parliamentary website to stop these inconsistencies. We need 10,000 signatures by 15 November to make the government respond or 100,000 by the same date for the issue to be debated in Parliament. The link to the petition is Amend guidance for PIP claimants on advising the DWP of travel abroad - Petitions (parliament.uk).

Conference disabled people, including our Disabled Members, should have the same right to travel abroad as non-disabled people. Travel does not change a person's care or mobility needs and we shouldn't be treated less favourably than non-disabled people when we want to travel abroad.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC to:

1. Promote the petition on all UNISON's social media and e-newsletters and send it to all Branches to encourage members to sign before 15 November.
2. Launch a campaign to change the rules on reporting travel abroad for PIP claimants to the eight weeks rule that applies to people claiming Tax Credits
3. Work with Labour Link to lobby for a future Labour government will introduce an eight-week rule for PIP claimants travelling abroad.

Newcastle City

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

19.1

In 7th paragraph insert new 2nd sentence as follows: "For Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) users the impact of this confused guidance is even greater as inaccessible communications from the DWP is already a barrier."

Insert new final action point:

"Campaign for more accessible communications from DWP, including for Deaf BSL users."

National Deaf Members' Caucus

20. ACCESSIBILITY ON THE RAILWAY NETWORK.

Conference, we all support the RMT in their campaign to maintain ticket offices and the employment of railway personnel. The removal of ticket offices at stations and cuts to railway staff disproportionately affect disabled people. Conference believes that train station offices and railway personnel should not be reduced to protect the safety and wellbeing of disabled passengers.

Conference, we call upon the national disabled members committee to work with the national WET service group to campaign against proposed plans to reduce ticket offices and the reduction of railway personnel, and to petition the government, Network Rail, and railway operators to promote engagement and consultation with relevant service users.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

20.1

In 1st paragraph, insert new 3rd sentence as follows: "Disabled women can feel particularly at risk using public transport, especially at night and in the darker winter months, and not having a clear place to go for help from a staff member will only exacerbate this." At the end of the exiting 3rd sentence insert ", including disabled women passengers."

National Women Members' Caucus

21. INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION OF 'DO NOT RESUSCITATE' NOTICES - NEVER AGAIN

Conference notes that UNISON has campaigned vigorously on behalf of disabled people.

Disabled people across the UK have a right to equal access to health care just like anyone else. Yet the potentially unlawful use of 'Do not Resuscitate' notices

for fit and healthy people during the COVID-19 pandemic was discriminatory and put lives in danger.

Covid-19 had a devastating impact on society as a whole but the effect on people with a disability was catastrophic. The number of people who died with Covid-19 who were disabled was more than double than those with no disability. People who have a disability were not only denied essential services, hospital appointments, ability to attend day centres, access to respite, access to food, if they contracted Covid. Many had 'Do not Resuscitate' notices put in place against their will and or knowledge.

This was the case even when the only disability was ASD and there was no physical reason the person would not have responded to treatment the same as any other person. This was brought to light by Mencap and reported in the Guardian newspaper. The Care Quality Commission stated in their review into the application of 'Do not Resuscitate' decisions, that the inappropriate application of 'Do not Resuscitate' notices had caused potentially avoidable deaths. This can never be allowed to happen again. No one has the right to be denied their basic human right to life.

This unacceptable practice cannot be repeated. Please support. This was blatant discrimination supported by the government who approved the NICE guidance regarding using the clinical fragility scale which allowed this situation to come about.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Disabled Committee to:

Campaign and lobby for a UK-wide examination of 'Do not Resuscitate' policy, practice, and procedure across all health care settings to ensure better monitoring and controls are in place in the application of 'Do not Resuscitate' notices to protect disabled people's rights.

UNISON Northern Ireland

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

22. ACCESS TO HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT

Conference notes that a disproportionate number of disabled people have to attend hospital for appointments and treatments. Why, then is hospital equipment not adequate for use by disabled people? For example, for many disabled people with mobility issues trolleys and examination tables do not go low enough and eye testing equipment is often impossible to access with dignity.

Conference believes that everyone should be able to access health care facilities easily and with dignity and respect.

Conference, we call upon the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the national health service group, health branches and other relevant parts of the union to campaign for medical equipment to be available to all,

regardless of their access requirements, and for this issue to be the subject of a UNISON campaign for better access to health care for disabled members.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

22.1

At end of 1st paragraph insert: “A lack of visual display equipment in hospitals often means that Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) users miss being verbally called to their appointment, causing confusion and upset”

In 3rd paragraph after “requirements” insert “for standardised use of visual display equipment to increase access for Deaf BSL users,”.

National Deaf Members' Caucus

23. ALL DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE UK SHOULD HAVE FREE PRESCRIPTIONS

Conference notes that England remains the only nation in the UK that continues to impose outdated, illogical, and discriminatory charges for medical prescriptions.

Disabled people including our Disabled Members are more likely to require medical prescriptions. They are also more likely to be low paid and the cost-of-living crisis is making it harder than ever for disabled people to pay for their medication. This Government's own research shows that the number of people who have a long-term condition who are not covered by a medical or income-related exemption is approximately 15% of prescription users.

In 2022, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society stated that community pharmacists in England had seen an increase in the number of patients not collecting prescriptions. One pharmacist said it is a “daily experience seeing patients making choices to forgo their own medications or prioritise their limited finance to support a child or more vulnerable family member”.

In March 2023, the Prescription Charges Coalition carried out a survey of people with long-term conditions. They found that 1 in 10 were not able to collect their prescriptions in the past 12 months because of the cost. With 15 million people in England living with long-term conditions, this could equate to hundreds of thousands of people going without the medicines they need.

While the Tories decision to U-turn on their decision to start charging for prescriptions to the over-60s they have still pressed ahead with another increase in charges for those that do pay. The cost of a prescription for a single medication is now £9.65. While 12-month prescription pre-payment certificate can reduce the costs for some if people are on several types of medication, they still cost £111.60 which is beyond the reach of many of our Disabled Members.

Research has shown that charging for prescriptions is having a significant impact on the ability of disabled people, including our Disabled Members, in

England to stay well. This in turn impacts their quality of life, ability to stay in work, employment opportunities and health outcomes. It is outdated, illogical and discriminatory.

Conference it is clear that the system needs urgent change for disabled people, including our Disabled Members as it does not meet our needs, it puts our health at risk and in the longer-term can cost the NHS more when people are hospitalised because they couldn't afford to pay prescription charges.

Conference calls on National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC to:

1. Launch a campaign to call on the Government to "Scrap the Prescription Tax" in England.
2. Work with Labour Link to lobby for a future Labour government that will follow Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in scrapping prescription charges.

Northern Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

24. MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Conference 115 people in the UK take their own lives every week and 75% of people who die by suicide are men. It is the biggest cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. In 2020, 75% of those who took their own lives were male. 4,880 men and boys died by suicide, that equates to 12 deaths every day of the year.

While people of all genders can experience mental health problems stigma and gender stereotypes mean men's mental health issues are often go unnoticed. A recent report from Champion Health found that 9% of employees are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm but that men are half as likely as women to get help.

Societal norms can make it harder for men and boys to admit when they're struggling to cope. According to statistics from NHS only 40% of men said it would take thoughts of suicide or self-harm before they would seek help and 11% of men say they have no friends compared to 7% of women.

Men see mental health issues as a sign of weakness, they don't talk about their problems with their family or friends, and they don't seek professional help. And we know that this is affecting men in our union.

According to the Mental Health Foundation men who don't talk about their emotions are less likely to recognise symptoms of mental health issues in themselves. Men will throw themselves into work, turn alcohol or drugs, and even go missing rather than ask for help with their mental health and 73% of adults that go missing are men.

Surprisingly the pandemic didn't have as adverse an impact on mental health as was expected and suicide and self-harm rates amongst men falling slightly. Research suggests this may be because resilience is a common human response during times of adversity. Unfortunately, rates have already returned to pre-pandemic levels and more.

For too long male mental health has been ignored and not talked about. Symptoms such as irritability, loss of control, risk-taking and sudden bouts of anger are written off as a mid-life crisis when they're actually, a cry for help.

Every year Men's Mental Health Week takes place in June, usually around the time of UNISON's National Delegate Conference. It aims to raise awareness about the health challenges faced by men and to help promote strategies for better physical and mental well-being and to give all men and boys access to information to help them live healthier, longer and more fulfilling lives.

Mental health can be classed as a disability under the Equality Act, but many employers still don't recognise this, particularly when it comes to male employees. Mental health can impact on our ability to do our jobs and to be active in our union, again we know this impacts more on men who are less likely to seek help and support or talk about their problems. And even if they do want to seek help, they quite often don't know where to go.

We recognise that for shop stewards and reps asking a member about their mental wellbeing can be hard. But if the question is asked more often than it will become standard practice and our male members may be more open to answering honestly.

Conference, we can't force men to get help, but we can let them know that support is available and that talking about mental health is a sign of strength not weakness.

Conference instructs National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC and Service Group Executives to:

1. Develop and deliver a campaign to raise awareness of male mental health issues.
2. Use Men's Mental Health Week in June to promote positive action related to men's mental wellbeing including at National Delegate Conference
3. Provide details of organisations that can help men struggling with mental health issue on the UNISON website.
4. Create an online safe space where men can discuss and share their experiences.
5. Consider how the UNISON College can provide awareness raising of Men's Mental Health

Northern Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

24.1

Insert new 6th paragraph as follows:

“Deaf men who are native British Sign Language (BSL) users can face additional challenges in talking about mental health, with many also facing increased rates of isolation due to societal communication barriers.”

At end of action point 1 insert “, including the issues faced by Deaf men.”

National Deaf Members' Caucus

24.2

In action point 4, after “men” insert “who are UNISON members”

National Disabled Members Committee

25. THE ‘HEALTH AND DISABILITY’ WHITE PAPER; AN ATTACK ON DISABLED PEOPLE’S INCOME AND INDEPENDENCE

Conference notes the publication of “Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper”, published by government in March 2023.

The government claims this new set of policies related to welfare benefits will help more disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work. However, conference believes the opposite is true and that the key changes will push disabled people further into financial hardship, at a time when we are already experiencing the sharp end of a cost-of-living crisis.

Conference notes that this government has presided over 13 years of policies that have punished disabled people through cutting disability premiums and introducing unfair work capability assessments, conditionality, and sanctions. Even for those disabled people in work, the disability pay gap is growing and now stands at a shocking 17.2% or £3,700 less a year than non-disabled workers. Added to this, the government’s National Disability Strategy was found to be unlawful and based on an unlawful consultation.

It's perhaps only to be expected that the government’s new white paper is mainly a collection of small-scale pilots and re-announcements, while its key proposals are about making more disabled people work longer hours, whatever the pay. This is dressed up as ending work capability assessments but in fact it will make matters worse with individual job centre advisors now being able to decide whether you are entitled to benefits or whether you need to find work or work more hours. There is no mention of an appeal process, and the system seems even more unfair than work capability assessments.

Conference believes that making Personal Independence Payments (PIP) – and Adult Disability Payment in Scotland - the qualifier to exempt you from looking for work- and work-related activity is just a ploy to force more disabled people into work whether or not they are ready for it, and to pay them less

money in Universal Credit. In any case, we know that PIP is not a fair system and UNISON's 2018 report "Punished for going to work" makes clear that it needs to be reformed.

Conference strongly believes the proposal to make work coaches the sole decision maker on ability to work is a retrograde step. Work coaches are not disability specialists and the DWP should not be using them to make life changing decisions about disabled people.

The white paper also appears to be changing the nature of PIP, so it is about covering the additional costs of being disabled and not about fostering independence. This is a crucial difference and suggests government are trying to get away with a lower cost service that is about disabled people simply surviving rather than thriving.

Conference believes these proposals will drive disabled people further into poverty, compounding the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Disabled people already live on lower incomes as we are more likely to work part-time or be in low paid jobs. With the added cost of increasingly expensive electricity for vital equipment such as dialysis machines, drip machines, oxygen, and medicine dispensers, as well as additional costs for dietary specific foods not easily found at a food bank, disabled people do not need further attacks on welfare benefits that help us to survive.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Seek appropriate opportunities to widely publicise these proposed changes to the benefits system and their potential negative impact on disabled people's income and independence.
2. Work through UNISON Labour Link to lobby the Labour Party to develop a realistic and supportive plan to reform the welfare benefits system so that it puts the needs and independence of disabled people at its heart.
3. Seek to ensure the experience of disabled people is included in UNISON's work on the cost of livings crisis, including through the Labour Link.

National Disabled Members Committee

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

26. NEURODIVERSITY AWARENESS

Despite the increasing recognition of neurodiversity, many people with neurodivergent conditions continue to face significant challenges in their daily lives. These challenges include stigma, discrimination, and a lack of understanding and support from society at large. This can lead to negative outcomes, such as unemployment, social isolation, and poor mental health.

The purpose of this motion is to raise awareness about neurodiversity and its importance in promoting a more inclusive and accepting society. By increasing awareness and understanding of neurodiversity, we can reduce stigma and

discrimination and create a more supportive environment for people with neurodivergent conditions. Members have voiced a fear of revealing their neurodiversity as many have found that after years of working in a post, they suddenly find themselves undergoing capacity at work.

This Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to take the following actions in the next year;

1. Encourage employers to provide training and resources on neurodiversity and how to support individuals with neurodivergent conditions.
2. Promote the inclusion of neurodiverse individuals in all aspects of society, including education, employment, and social activities.
3. Advocate for policies and practices that support neurodiversity, such as accommodations in the workplace and educational initiatives.
4. Raise awareness through public events, social media campaigns and educational initiatives.

By embracing neurodiversity, we can build a more diverse, creative and compassionate world that benefits us all.

Lothian Health

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

26.1

Insert new 2nd paragraph as follows:

“Women who are neurodivergent face additional barriers, often not being diagnosed until later life due to stereotypes about women and how neurodiversity is assessed. This leads to problems at school and at work that can hold neurodivergent women back from achieving their full potential. Some medication can also exacerbate the effects of the menopause and vice versa. There are also substantial and systemic delays to assessment pathways for all, including women, that need to be addressed with significant additional investment.”

Insert additional action point 5 as follows:

“Work with appropriate parts of the union to campaign for significant investment in neurodiversity assessment pathways and support services.”

National Women Members' Caucus

27. HATE CRIME EQUALITY

Elevating the offence of assault against the disabled community from an assault to an aggravated assault.

We call upon conference to support the motion to elevate the offence of assault against a member of the disabled community from an assault to an aggravated assault by influencing the government to make changes to the law.

Currently there are five categories that are classed as hate crimes.

- a. race or ethnicity
- b. religion or beliefs
- c. sexual orientation
- d. disability, and
- e. transgender identity

Currently only Race and Religion can have an 'aggravated' prosecution under the present statute.

These are crimes where there is demonstrated hostility based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

Or

Crimes that have been motivated by hostility based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

Someone can be a victim of more than one type of hate crime.

While a crime may be recorded as a 'hate crime', it may only be prosecuted as such if evidence of hostility is submitted as part of the case file.

Hate crimes are personal; they target vulnerable people and send the message 'You are not welcome.' they reinforce stereotypes, long term prejudice and patterns of discrimination against certain groups of people and communities.

Currently only perpetrators of crimes which are defined as hate crimes involving religious or racial motivation can be charged with aggravated assault.

Conference we believe that hate crimes involving the disabled community should also have the elevated charge of aggravated assault available to the police service to charge perpetrators of these crimes.

Gov.UK reports Key results:

In year ending March 2022, there were 155,841 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, an increase of 26% from year ending March 2021 (124,104 offences)

There were 109,843 race hate crimes, 8,730 religious hate crimes, 26,152 sexual orientation hate crimes, 14,242 disability hate crimes and 4,355 transgender hate crimes in year ending March 2022

There were annual increases in all five strands of hate crime, ranging from 19% for race hate crimes to 56% for transgender hate crimes.

Sexual orientation hate crimes increased by 41% (to 26,152), disability hate crimes by 43% (to 14,242) and transgender identity hate crimes by 56% (to

4,355); these percentage increases were much higher than seen in recent years.

We believe disability hate crimes should be treated equally with parity in the way perpetrators can be charged.

Conference instructs the National Disabled members committee to:

1. Raise this issue with the National Executive Council (NEC) and Labour Link
2. Request that the NEC and Labour Link lobby around this unfair issue using the appropriate channels available to them.

East Midlands Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

27.1

After the paragraph that starts “Currently only perpetrators”, insert new paragraph as follows:

“Conference notes that Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) users often face abuse based on their culture and language, rather than in relation to disability or ethnicity, and it is not clear that this is covered by existing hate crime legislation.”

National Deaf Members' Caucus

27.2

In the paragraph that begins “Currently only race” insert at end “although hate crimes committed in relation to disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity can receive an uplift in terms of sentencing meaning perpetrators of hate crimes can receive harsher sentencing due to these factors.”

At the end of the paragraph that begins “Hate crimes are personal” insert “This can be for more than one reason and often people are targeted due to multiple characteristics and the law does not always acknowledge the intersectionality of victims.”

At the end of the paragraph that begins “Currently only perpetrators” insert “Conference notes that in 2021, subsequent to a consultation which UNISON responded to, the Law Commission recommended the creation of parity between protected characteristics in relation to hate crime but this has not been implemented by government. ”

At the end of the paragraph that begins “Conference we believe” insert

“This should also be extended to LGBT+ hate crime where it is also worth noting that the prescribed protected characteristics do not include hate crime against nonbinary and gender variant people.

Conference also has grave reservations about the latest College of Policing (CoP) guidance on the recording of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). These are incidents that don't reach the threshold of a crime, but may be precursor indicators of deteriorating behaviour and increased victimisation. The distressing death of Fiona Pilkington and her disabled daughter contributed to the development of NCHI recording. Police failed to connect dozens of separate calls about local youths targeting the family. However, when Harry Miller challenged the recording of NCHIs in the courts after making transphobic comments, the CoP revised its guidance. Now the details of perpetrators will not be recorded on NCHIs. This renders them useless at identifying deteriorating behaviour, and potentially preventing a hate crime incident that could result in abuse, assault, or worse."

In the paragraph that starts "We believe disability" insert "and LGBT+" after "disability".

Insert final action point as follows:

"3. Work with the Police and Justice Service Group Executive to understand the impact of the CoP NCHI recording guidance on deterring further offending, or an escalation of such offending, and consider campaigning for change if deemed appropriate."

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

27.3

After the paragraph that ends "higher than seen in recent years" insert new paragraphs as follows:

"Although some forces continue to record misogyny as a hate crime, they have no ability to apply aggravated factors to this to increase sentencing as this is not recognised by current legislation. The Law Commission review did not recommend that misogyny should be prosecuted as a hate crime, which can fail to identify those victims of violence against women and girls who are specifically targeted due to their gender.

Conference further notes that in its response to the Law Commission review of hate crime legislation, UNISON raised that the definition of disability hate crime is inadequate. The courts have in some cases claimed that victim's have been targeted not because of their disability but because they are seen as "vulnerable" and this has allowed some perpetrators to escape justice. For disabled women, these stereotypes of "vulnerability" can be even stronger and can lead to offences committed against them due to their disability and gender being prosecuted without any aggravated factors applied."

Insert new action point 3 as follows:

"3. Work with the NEC and Labour Link to lobby for a more workable definition of disability hate crime and the recognition of offences committed against disabled women and girls which could be affected by their intersectionality."

National Women Members' Caucus

28. ABOUT TIME ALL DISABILITIES WERE EQUAL

This UNISON Disabled Members Conference believes that it is about time all disabilities were recognised and treated by society as equal.

Created in 1968 by a design student called Susanne Koefoed through a design competition by Rehabilitation International and adopted by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Symbol of Access (ISA) has served as a global icon for accessibility for almost 55 years. This sign, the white icon of a person in a wheelchair set against a blue background is known worldwide. This is found on toilet doors, painted onto parking bays and seen on public transport signage and indicates that a facility is accessible for those with disabilities, or solely for their use.

This sign has served a useful purpose, but it does not reflect the disability that affects disabled people across the United Kingdom. In the general population about only 5% of those with disabilities (around 600,000) are wheelchair users but 2.5-3 million are visually impaired, 1.5-6 million have reading difficulties, 8 million are deaf or hard of hearing, 15 million have mental health difficulties and 1 in 3 people over 55 have Arthritis, to name but a small selection.

The symbol has helped so many people in wheelchairs and had such a positive impact on how they navigate around public spaces, but it has also caused a deflection issue for disabled people who don't use wheelchairs. These people already struggle, and they receive public judgement on top of that. People who question those with invisible disabilities have good intentions, but they are very misinformed. This is an education and awareness challenge.

We need to address this issue now, 55 years is a long time for your disability not to be recognised and those with disabilities are entitled to better recognition, provision and equality.

This Conference believes that it cannot be beyond the wit of human capacity to design a new and representative universal symbol of disability which could be used to indicate access and facilities. In fact, some work has already been done on this issue by interested organisations.

This Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council to take this issue up with: -

1. The Trades Union Congress
2. The United Kingdom and devolved Governments
3. National Disability Organisations throughout the UK

Conference believes that it is about time all disabilities were equal and that these organisations need to be progressing ways to achieve this by adopting an updated symbol for disability.

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

29. MAKING POLICE SERVICES ACCESSIBLE TO DEAF PEOPLE

Conference notes that some police services in the UK have specialised Police Link Officer with Deaf People (PLOD). This has helped to make police services more accessible to Deaf people in some areas, but it remains a post code lottery without a consistent service in all parts of the UK.

Turn-over of staff also means that there are vacancies and time required for re-training which can lead to gaps even where the PLOD service exists.

Conference notes that the 999-emergency number is now accessible to Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) speakers. A videophone system is in operation which allows a Deaf person to phone 999 and use BSL to report their emergency.

Conference notes that for many non-emergency issues such as anti-social behaviour, the 101 non-emergency number is recommended. However, there is no facility for Deaf BSL users to access this number using our own language.

Conference therefore instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Support appropriate campaigns for the 101 non-emergency number to provide a videophone BSL option in line with the 999 service.
2. Work with the Police and Justice Service Group to campaign for an extension of the PLOD service to all areas of the UK and to investigate ways of encouraging police services to raise the profile and value of PLODs so that this is seen as an important role that officers are attracted to taking on.

National Deaf Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

30. PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENTS – WE NEED A FAIR PIP ASSESSMENT PROCESS WHICH IS FIT FOR PURPOSE

This National Disabled Conference notes with concern that the process of applying for Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) continues to be long, arduous, and stressful with an unacceptably large number of disabled people still being refused benefit through the PIP process.

Conference is further concerned that the staff employed to undertake assessments frequently have little knowledge of, or expertise in, medical and disability issues and that this lack of understanding is compounded by the fact

that they often appear to have little empathy with applicants during the PIP interview process. This is particularly the case in the assessment of hidden/non-apparent disabilities which present assessors with conditions with which they are frequently unfamiliar and for which they have received little training. This leads to a situation in which many assessments are entirely inadequate in reflecting the real needs of vulnerable people and in which the information set out on completed forms is all too often based on a very superficial assessment.

Conference recognises that the vast majority of PIPs are awarded to people who have life-long disabilities or are experiencing long term health conditions. Conference is appalled that vulnerable people in this situation are regularly compelled to reapply for PIP and thus be unnecessarily subjected to the acute stress and anxiety which this inevitably causes over the period of the reassessment. Conference further believes that, given the increasing backlog and considerable delays produced by the number of unnecessary reassessments, the time during which they subject to this pressure and worry is entirely unacceptable.

Conference believes that this situation needs to be addressed by the introduction of appropriate life-long PIP awards which properly reflect the needs of people with disabilities and long-term health issues.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to:

1. Continue to campaign for a PIP assessment system which is adequately resourced so that applicants are properly assessed and no longer subject to unacceptable delays.
2. Call on the Government to ensure that all PIP assessors are adequately trained to recognise and understand all aspects of disability issues - including hidden/non-apparent disabilities.
3. Campaign for the need for appropriate life-long PIP awards to avoid the situation in which people with long term disabilities and health issues are subjected to continual reassessment.
4. Continue to work with UNISON's There for You charity to provide information to Branch Welfare Officers to assist them in signposting members to support services assisting members going through PIP assessments.
5. Work with UNISON Labour Link in support of a PIP system which is fit for purpose in terms of meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

Isle of Wight LG

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

30.1

At the end of the second paragraph insert:

“All too often the long-term effects for some of being HIV positive, and the side effects of anti-viral treatment, are ignored in the assessment process for PIP.

Many treatments can cause type 2 diabetes and chronic fatigue, amongst other complications which can impact ability to carry out daily activities which is assessed as part of the PIP process.”

Add final action point:

“6. Work with the National LGBT+ Committee to raise awareness of PIP for people living with complications of HIV and its treatment and seek to ensure there is relevant signposting on UNISON’s web site.”

Disabled LGBT+ Members Caucus

31. MORE ACCESSIBLE ACCESS TO WORK PROCESSES NOW!

Conference notes:

- a. Access to Work is a UK Government scheme to support disabled workers to get into and stay in work.
- b. Access to Work currently relies heavily on paper-based form filling to make a claim, access support, and request further support if a person’s needs change.
- c. Access to Work can be applied for over the phone and online, however, subsequent parts of the process require forms to be filled in and posted to the Department for Work and Pensions.

Conference believes:

- i. The process of applying for and claiming money back from Access to Work should be as accessible as possible.
- ii. The processes associated with Access to Work should be brought up to date to meet the variety of needs disabled members have.
- iii. A lack of options beyond filling in and posting forms, calling and emailing the Department for Work and Pensions may be putting some disabled workers off applying for and claiming support they are entitled to.

Conference resolves:

1. To mandate the National Disabled Members’ Committee to lobby the Minister for Work and Pensions on the issue of accessibility around Access to Work.
2. To mandate the National Disabled Members’ Committee to develop a national campaign which actively encourages Regions and Branches to engage members to understand their views on the scheme which shapes lobbying by National Disabled Members’ Committee.

Community and Voluntary Organisations

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

32. INCLUSIVE CHAIRS GROUPS THAT REPRESENT THE MEMBERS THAT WE SERVE

UNISON is a growing union that strongly believes in equality, diversity, inclusion and equity and we maximise the benefits of this to increase our bargaining and campaigning strength. We recruit and encourage activism from members of all backgrounds. Despite this, many chairs of national committees, including self-organised groups and service groups executive chairs, do not always reflect how diverse our union is.

Black members can face barriers to being elected into positions of responsibility, including as chairs of national committees. As in any organisation, there are often 'gate keepers' who want to retain positions of power. However, UNISON is a union that has equality at its very heart, and we need to break down any obstacles that exist to Black members' participation in our union.

Some of those barriers include:

- a. Not enough Black members on the committee in question to ensure Black members have a strong enough voice to support Black members getting elected on to the chairs group.
- b. Some regions not encouraging Black members to put themselves forward for elections and consistently sending all white delegations.

Conference notes that UNISON has rules on fair representation for Black members and other under-represented groups, but these are not as strong as the rules on women's proportionality.

Conference believes it is important that regions, self-organised groups and service group executives take a proactive approach and seek to ensure that the chairs groups of national committees fairly represent our Black members.

In the Year of Black Workers 2023, conference instructs the National Disabled Members Committee to work with National Black Members Committee and other appropriate UNISON structures to:

1. Promote opportunities for advancement within our democratic structures for Black disabled members.
2. Formulate guidelines for the national disabled members committee to seek to ensure fair representation of Black members on the committee chairs group
3. Identify and seek to eliminate any barriers that may be preventing Black members from being elected on to the national disabled members committee chairs group.

4. Work with LAOS to deliver training for the national disabled members committee to include understanding unconscious bias, inclusion, and diversity.
5. Consider ways of supporting Black disabled members with mentoring or peer support to seek to assist them in being able to confidently take up chair roles.
6. Identify best practice in this work and share lessons learned with other self-organised groups and with service groups where appropriate.

National Black Members' Caucus

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

Developing an Efficient and Effective Union

33. MAKING UNISON TRULY DISABILITY FRIENDLY

Conference believes that Unison needs to be leading the way in helping to resolve the issues that we face as disabled members and making us feel true participants in the workings of our union.

Conference notes that:

- a. There are at least 9.8m people with a disability in the UK (source: ONS)
- b. Around 21% of working age adults are disabled (source: Gov.UK)
- c. 21% of Unison members = 273,000 disabled Unison members
- d. If 80% of disabilities are non-visible this equates to 218,400 members

We, at this conference understand our own disabilities and the way that we overcome the challenges that life throws at us – whether at work, at home or within our recreational lives - but how well do we understand enough about the challenges that the person sitting beside us might face? We cannot possibly understand, as there are so many types and sub-types of disability that affect us in an individual way.

The way we overcome our disabilities can be complex. We know that the social model of disability gives us clarity about how barriers in our way can stop us from taking a full part in society. But how many of us can say that we are not frustrated by the obstacles and disrespect that we regularly face?

Our reps tell the employer that they should make meetings disability friendly. And yet one of the issues for disabled members is that our own chairs of Unison branches and regional and national meetings may not always consider nor ask what we need as disabled people so that we can fully take part in meetings.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members National Committee to:

1. Engage with regional disabled members SOGs to formulate a ‘train the trainer’ package, aimed at educating activists who are chairs of meetings (branch, regional and national) on the different types of disabilities and how they can better deliver disability inclusive meetings.
2. Engage with Unison College on how to deliver on the training package. This must include the requirement for only volunteers from the regional disabled members SOGs to undertake the training so that disabled members will be lay tutors for this purpose.
3. Urge regions and national committees to take part in this initiative, to include this Chairperson training as a regular feature in their training offers.
4. Urge branches, regions and national committees to support this initiative and undertake this training for Chair people as a priority.

West Midlands Region

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

33.1

In second paragraph, point a. delete “at least 9.8m people” and insert “9.58m people of working age”.

In third paragraph, first sentence, delete “disabilities” and insert “impairments”.

In action point 1, delete “types of disabilities” and insert “barriers disabled people face”.

In action point 2, after “include” insert “considering”.

Insert new action point 5: “Review and circulate UNISON’s guidance on ensuring accessible online and hybrid meetings.”

National Disabled Members Committee

34. MAKE OUR UNION DOCUMENTS AND LANGUAGE INCLUSIVE TO NATIONAL READING AGE OF 9

Conference notes that GOV.UK recommends that written communication is aimed at a reading age of 9 for readability.

As a union we use many terms and specific language that people outside the union don’t use every day and don’t always understand.

When a disabled person joins the union, it is like being in a place where everyone speaks a different language. This can make it harder to recruit and retain new members.

With so many non-visible disabilities including people who may have more difficulties processing written or heard information it is time to change.

Why do we expect new members and activists to learn so many new terms and ways of doing things, when at its heart democracy should be accessible to all.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC to:

1. Bring UNISON's language and terminology in line with the national reading age and everyday language use as advised by GOV.UK.
2. Create national access standards for all documents, conferences and communication that make unison an example of how to lead the way in inclusion of all disabled workers.

Surrey County

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

34.1

In third paragraph, first sentence, delete "a disabled person joins" and insert "people join". Insert new second sentence as follows: "This is even more the case for disabled members who face additional communication barriers and to Deaf native British Sign Language (BSL) speakers and others for whom English is not a first language."

At end of action point 2 insert "including Deaf workers whose native language is BSL."

National Deaf Members' Caucus

34.2

In third paragraph, first sentence, delete "a disabled person joins" and insert "people join". Insert new second sentence as follows: "This is even more the case for disabled members who face additional communication barriers and to Deaf native British Sign Language (BL) speakers for whom English is not a first language."

National Disabled Members Committee

35. PERSONAL ASSISTANT CLAIM FORM

Conference recognises and applauds the existence of a Personal Assistant claim form.

This is intended for use to pay any facilitator/personal assistant attending conferences/meetings an allowance for time spent facilitating, which is currently paid at £10.42 per hour.

This is paid in addition to any subsistence claimed by the member and their personal assistant.

Unfortunately, the existence of this form and the ability to claim this payment is not as widely known as it should be amongst members, although it is mentioned

in the financial handbook. Many Disabled members and their personal assistants are not claiming money they are entitled to through no fault of their own.

Neither is it clear from the form if it is intended to actually be used by branches, or if its use is restricted to National Committees.

Conference believes this could inadvertently lead to branches and national committees discriminating against UNISON disabled members.

Therefore Conference calls upon the Disabled Members Committee to:-

1. work with the NEC to promote the use of the personal assistant claim form amongst branches, national committees and the disabled members community. This needs to include details of who is responsible for paying out the allowance and guidance on the criteria to claim.
2. explore issuing the personal assistant claim form at the point that a personal assistant is registered on the OCS system.

Derbyshire County

National Disabled Members Committee policy: **SUPPORT**

Amendments Ruled Out of Order

Not Competent

Motion 1: Recognising Disabled Members

Delete 1st paragraph and insert:

"Conference recognises the work that the National Disabled Members Committee (NDMC) and all levels of our structures undertake to progress the policies of our Conference and influence UNISON'S national negotiating, bargaining and campaigning agenda to reflect this.

This work is not carried out in isolation. We work across communities, workplaces, and the political spectrum to achieve our objectives.

Conference notes that the work of Disabled Members in UNISON needs to be recognised.

Conference further notes that this work is fundamental in ensuring that the principles of UNISON'S Organising to Win strategy are enacted, particularly in the areas of activist recruitment, organising and training".

In 4th paragraph delete "and assurances from reps on the National Disabled Members Committee (NDMC)"

In 6th paragraph:

In 1st sentence insert "s" after "Disabled Member".

In 2nd sentence delete

"a Disabled Member who has"

and replace with

"Disabled Members who have"

In action point 1 delete: "Establish a small working group to"

After "criteria" delete "and" and insert " , "

After "Member" insert "s"

Renumber last paragraph as action point "3." And add "s" after "Member"

Point 1 needs to stay in

Motion 6: Access to Mental Health Training and Advice for Workers with Mental Illness or Other Nervous Disorder

In 2nd paragraph, insert inverted commas before and after “mental health conditions” and before and after “mental illness and other nervous disorder”.

In 4th paragraph insert inverted commas for ONS definition of mental health conditions as follows:

‘Conference notes that the ONS distinguishes two categorisations of mental health conditions: “common mental health problems (which includes depression, bad nerves, and anxiety)” and “mental illness or other nervous disorder (which includes mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, manic depression, and other serious mental health problems). However, these are outdated and often unhelpful categorisations.’”

Insert new paragraph 5 as follows:

“The impact on the LGBT+ community is even more stark. A YouGov survey in 2022 showed that 51% of LGBT+ people experienced, or were diagnosed with a mental health condition, compared to a third of the general population (32%). The impact is especially severe for Bi+ individuals, with 67% having experienced, or being diagnosed with a mental health condition, and bisexual people being six times more likely than the general population to self-harm.”

In action point 1) delete

“to assess whether it also provides our stewards the knowledge and skills needed to represent members with more serious mental illness or other nervous disorder effectively”

and replace with

“to assess whether it provides stewards with the knowledge and skills needed to represent members experiencing workplace issues related to mental ill-health effectively”.

Insert new action point:

“3. To petition the ONS to update outdated language related to mental health currently used in their guidance and statistics.”

Disabled LGBT+ Members' Caucus

Motion 15: Mind the Pay Gap!

In 2nd paragraph, before “It is becoming clear”, insert “Although the gender pay gap clearly still exists and improvements continue to be exceedingly slow,”. At end of this paragraph insert “With the current rate of progress meaning it will take decades to achieve gender equality when it comes to pay, it is obvious that employers will need to do more than just publish data and accountability for robust action plans is required to achieve timely and sustainable improvement.”

In the 5th paragraph, after “250 workers” insert “and to require employers to produce action plans to address pay gaps.”

Insert new 6th and 7th paragraphs as follows:

“It is also important to understand the cumulative impact on disabled women of multiple layers of pay gaps. This is also the case for Black and LGBT+ disabled women and for those that have a number of protected characteristics. It is vitally important that the added impact of these layers of inequality is analysed, understood and forms part of ways of addressing pay gaps.

Conference further notes that the double pay gap disabled women face is compounded by the impact of the “gender pension gap”. Recent TUC analysis has found that women are more than twice as likely as men to miss out on being in a workplace pension scheme. They are also more likely to suffer from a huge pensions income gap, with a disproportionate impact on disabled women as a result of historic issues with the National Insurance system and continuing gaps with pensions auto-enrolment.”

In action point 4, delete “employees” and insert “employers”. At the end of this action point insert “and for employers to be required to produce action plans to address pay gaps”.

Insert new final action points as follows:

“5. Raise awareness of the gender pension gap, and support UNISON and appropriate campaigns for the inclusion of low paid disabled women workers in pensions auto-enrolment, for an increase in statutory minimum employer contributions and for changes to the National Insurance system so that it no longer feeds a gender pension gap for disabled women.

6. Explore how to better identify those impacted by multiple pay gaps and how to include intersectionality in all of our work on this issue.”

National Women Members’ Caucus

Beyond the Remit of Conference

Motion 31: More Accessible Access to Work Processes Now!

In a. insert at end “There is a separate system in Northern Ireland.”

In b. delete “form-filling” and insert “systems”.

At end of c. insert “and it is not widely known that reasonable adjustments to the process can be requested to avoid paper-based systems”

Add new points after c. as follows:

“d. UNISON’s survey of disabled members in autumn 2022 found members reporting very significant waiting times to get the support they needed from

Access to Work. Even where they were lucky enough to get assessed, many members reported that their employer refused to implement the adjustments recommended by Access to Work. Having to make up front payments, such as for taxis, was also a barrier for many low paid disabled members in accessing support.

1. UNISON is a founder member of the ground-breaking Disability Employment Charter which calls on government to reform Access to Work.
2. UNISON has produced a new and comprehensive Members Guide to Access to Work and has held regular online training sessions on how to get support from Access to Work”

At end if ii. Insert “including the need for up-front payment options and a stronger requirement on employers to implement Access to Work recommendations.”

At end of action point 1 insert “and for stronger requirements for employers to implement Access to Work recommendations, for the option of up-front payments, and for significant investment to cut down waiting times.”

At end, insert new action point as follows:

“3. Continue to circulate UNISON’s Members Guide to Access to Work and continue to hold regular member training sessions on applying to Access to Work.”

National Disabled Members’ Committee

Motion 34: Make our Union Documents and language inclusive to National Reading Age of 9

Add points 3 and 4:

1. Once these standards are created, to ensure there is a way to specify communication preferences within My Unison online, but if the member cannot access the internet for there to be another method of updating communication preferences clearly promoted. This communication preference list should not be limited to post, email and text but also include needs such as large print, print on different coloured paper or a different coloured font.
2. To regularly remind members to update their preferences in a variety of ways including online via My Unison, by calling a helpline, posting a form, or providing alternative support to enable communication to reach them in their desired format.

Norwich City UNISON

Introduces substantial new subject matter and Beyond the Remit of Conference

Motion 16: Get the Vote Out to Get the Tories Out!

Insert new 9th paragraph as follows:

“Research by Democracy Volunteers into the 2023 local elections, the first time photo identification was required to vote in Great Britain, showed that 53% of voters who were turned away from polling stations for not having the correct form of identification were “non white passing”. The research also found that some white voters were not asked for photo identification at all. This comes on the back of the Windrush scandal where the ability to show belonging was specifically targeted to deny rights to Black people in the UK.”

At end of action point 5 insert “and work with the Labour Link to campaign for the repeal of these requirements and to ensure full compensation for victims of the Windrush scandal.”

National Black Members' Caucus