

UNISON Disabled Members Annual Report 2023

Securing the legacy of the year of disabled workers



Disabled Members Annual Report 2023

Securing the Legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers

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1. Chairs' Introduction

In 2023 the National Disabled Members Committee has seen new additions, as well as some returning members of the committee. This year we have been meeting face to face, building relationships, and trying to come back from where we were last year. We realise this is effectively a different country to before Covid. Much has changed, but what remains the same is that we continue to campaign for and work on issues to achieve positive outcomes for disabled members in our union.

Like last year, hybrid and home working continue to be an important issue for disabled members, and we think this will remain as the world has changed so much since the height of the pandemic. Working solely from work buildings seems to be a thing of the past – so Access to Work has also become something we promote even more. We have established that working from home allows disabled people to manage their impairments better, allowing for an increase in productivity which is a win/win for us all.



As a committee we have considered suggestions for an event to celebrate Disability History Month this year and we agreed to focus on the campaign for a two-week deadline to respond to reasonable adjustment requests, along with the more formal suggestions from the Disability Employment Charter, with an element that showcases the work and achievements of disabled members. A subgroup from the national committee will be working on this ready for the event in November/December.

This year there was an issue raised by the Black Members Caucus regarding the diversity of the chairs group on NDMC. A sub-group was established to consider this issue and the full committee will further consider recommendations.

A letter from the National Disabled Members Committee has been written to the Secretary of State for Transport on the issue of the ticket office

closures, inviting them to meet with members from our national committee about this issue and we recognise it's something that will greatly affect disabled people.

We are delighted that we are sending two young disabled members to young members conference this year, one from the National Committee. At this year's NDC it was agreed that the age limit for young members would be raised and this was prioritised for debate and supported by NDMC. This is a positive step forward and will hopefully get more young disabled members involved too.

As chairs of the committee, we attend the Equality Liaison Committee with the NEC and the other SOGs throughout the year. The running of these events has changed after we shared concerns regarding NEC members taking up most of the meeting. We suggested that the bulk of the business should be led by the self-organised groups to raise issues and help make change. The SOG's have since had more of a chance to voice their issues, but we are still trying to push forward on some things that have not been fully listened to or completed, including the working group for the legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers. Almost everything we put forward we have had the full support of the other self-organised groups and in turn we have supported them on any issues they are facing.

It was agreed by the Equality Liaison Committee that a subgroup to take forward the Legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers would be arranged early this year, but as of the last Equality Liaison where we raised it again, no dates have been agreed. We are still chasing this because it is important to us and we find it disappointing that we are still waiting, as we near the end of The Year of Black Workers and are now heading into the Year of LGBT+ Workers without anything being arranged for the legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers.

This year we have also completed the UNISON Trans Ally training after speaking with our colleagues in LGBT+ which was an excellent learning experience for members of our committee, and we have encouraged our regions and other SOG's to complete it too. Supporting others, especially the other equality groups is very important to us. And of course, we would like to thank Emma Proctor for her input.

On the National Disabled Members Committee, we have had a pilot Reasonable Adjustment Passport now since 2019. This works well but it has been very difficult to get it moved forward and in use across the union. We have been pushing this at Equality Liaison and our NEC reps have also been pushing the issue. As an interim, it has been agreed the Online

Conference System (OCS) is going to store the data that people input for reasonable adjustments for conferences, so that we do not have to keep filling out the same information, but the aim is still to have the passports used across the union nationally, for conferences, meetings etc. We will continue to fight for this to be in place for everyone.

Our national committee remains a diverse group of people with a range of experience across our union, along with having representatives from the other self-organised groups so we can get the views from many backgrounds and nationalities. We all want the best for members in our union and do our best to work together from all our backgrounds, respectfully giving opinions and building on the work we do.

As a chairs group we have worked hard to represent you and face any challenges head on, ensuring that disabled members have a strong voice in our union, and we are working hand in hand with our NEC representatives.

We look forward to seeing you in Edinburgh.

Nicola Moran and Tony Slaven (Co-Chairs)

Susan Parkinson and Amanda Sweetlove (Deputy Co-Chairs)

Securing the Legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers

What next after 2022?

This year has been all about consolidating and building on the success of the Year of Disabled Workers which took place last year. We have again focused on our three key areas of organising, bargaining and campaigning, whilst also being aware of the need to address the impact of the cost of living crisis on our members. But we're also very keen to support our comrades as we have handed the baton on to the Year of Black Workers!



Lola, Tansaim and Bertha showing disabled members support for the Year of Black Workers

Training and organising our activists

We have run a full year's programme of our very popular Branch Disabled Members Officers and Contacts online training. At least 100 more activists have been fully trained up and are helping to create a network of knowledgeable and experienced officers who can help deliver on disability equality in their branches and encourage the next generation of disabled activists to come forward.

We now have a full suite of organising guides for our activists, including guides on how to become a branch disabled members officer, how to set up a branch self organised group and on organising for disability history month. Our two representation guides, one on representing disabled members and one on representing Deaf members, are an essential read for any branch steward and we have ensured they are made available through the UNISON College to all those undertaking stewards training.

Next steps for the Disability Employment Charter

We were delighted to celebrate the 150th employer sign-up to the Disability Employment Charter this year. UNISON is one of the eight founding members of the charter – and the only trade union. The charter is a campaigning tool which lists nine demands of government.

We joined partners in meeting with officials in the government's Cabinet Office to discuss what could be brought forward from the charter, particularly focusing on workforce disability monitoring and a two week limit to reasonable adjustment requests. UNISON also joined other founding members in meeting the Conservative Minister for Disabled People, Tom Pursglove MP, to ask him to consider implementing aspects of the charter.

However many of the calls in the charter may need to wait for an incoming Labour government and in this regard UNISON has been very successful in getting the asks in the charter on the Labour agenda. Working with the UNISON reps on the Labour National Policy Forum, we have successfully negotiated for five of the asks to be included in the agreed Labour policy platform. This includes mandatory publication of the disability pay gap, a simpler and more timely process for getting reasonable adjustments, statutory time off for equality reps, expanding access to statutory sick pay and extending the public sector equality duty to include public sector procurement. These are significant wins for UNISON and our partners and could see a step change for disability equality in the event of a Labour government coming to power.

Negotiating for disability equality in the workplace

Bargaining in our two key areas of Disability Leave and Reasonable Adjustment Passports has continued to be a priority this year. More and more branches have successfully negotiated for local agreements using our two bargaining guides and our model policies.

Working with the service group, we ran a webinar for Community branches interested in negotiating these policies with their employers. Discussions also took place with Compass, in conjunction with officers in our private contractors unit, to work towards developing disability leave and reasonable adjustment agreements with the employer and this work is continuing.

Cost of living crisis

We know the cost of living crisis has been a huge concern for our

members. We fed into UNISON's campaign, raising issues for disabled members who need to power up electrical equipment or are more vulnerable to cold. Our key areas of campaigning included maximising members' income through our work on welfare benefits, sick pay and the disability pay gap.

Some of our disabled members attended the TUC lobby on parliament in the autumn, raising the issue of the impact of the cost of living directly with MPs.

We also responded to the government's consultation on work capability assessments, outlining our opposition to any changes that would reduce disabled people's income.



Toby and Tara backing UNISON's NHS pay campaign

As part of the union-wide campaign on insecure work, UNISON commissioned a report from the Work Foundation. We were able to beef up the initial recommendations to include a two week deadline for reasonable adjustment requests, a stronger right to disability leave, better access to sick pay for insecure workers, upfront Access to Work (A2W) payments and more onus on employers to implement A2W recommendations.

Disability Action Plan

The government's previous National Disability Strategy was ruled unlawful in 2022 but this was overturned in July this year and they have now come forward with a new Disability Action Plan. As expected, it is a hotchpotch of different small-scale pilots and rehashed announcements with no strategic approach and no ambition for disabled people. UNISON has responded to

the consultation, in particular pointing out that there is almost no mention of disabled workers at all. We have reiterated our call for the demands included in the Disability Employment Charter to be implemented by government, including a two week deadline for reasonable adjustment requests, a stronger right to disability leave and mandatory publication of the disability pay gap.

Towards a national social care service

A social care service that delivers for workers and for service users is very important to our disabled members. We have fed into UNISON's Let's Make Care Work campaign which produced a joint report with the Fabian Society in July. We have continued to raise the issue of disabled people who employ personal assistants and the need to ensure they are included in our vision for a new national care service. We very much welcomed the Labour Party's decision to back UNISON's vision of a national care service at their policy meeting and we look forward to this being implemented.



NDMC member Graeme Ellis shows his support for the Save Care Now campaign

Celebrating our diversity

The National Disabled Members Committee is one of the most diverse of the national self organised group committees and we are particularly well represented by Black members representing regions, rather than just being in reserved seats. Our four caucuses for Black, LGBT+, women and Deaf members continue to go from strength to strength. We held two network meetings for each of these groups in June and August, in addition to holding meetings of caucus groups on the national committee at each of our meetings.

Supporting our activists

Building on the pilot Activists' Reasonable Adjustment passport system for national self organised group committees, we have continued to push the union nationally for the roll-out of a passport system for all disabled activists in our union. A new Reasonable Adjustment Passport (RAP) project has been set up to consider some of the issues in implementing this, including how it would work with the new Merlin system for branches. An interim solution whereby conference adjustments just needed to be requested once, and don't need to be asked for again at every conference, has now been agreed and has been put in place from this conference.

As part of the Branch Resources Review, there was an agreement to consider a central pool to pay for reasonable adjustment requests as currently branches and regions are responsible for this. We have raised this on a number of occasions at Equality Liaison Committee – we're still not there but we haven't given up as it's important branches don't feel reluctant to send disabled members to UNISON events and conferences due to the perceived cost of reasonable adjustments.

Working with our service groups

We continued to work closely with Health colleagues on our Disabled Inequality campaign to address disability discrimination in the NHS and we also worked with the Local Government service group on encouraging councils to sign up to the Disability Employment charter. We regularly attended the Local Government liaison committee meetings and use less formal ways of working with smaller service groups.

Labour Link liaison

This year we had a very productive involvement with UNISON's Labour Link as the work towards developing the Labour Party's manifesto for the next election ramped up.

Labour Link members of the national committee meet regularly to progress our work in this area and to ensure disabled members' voices are heard loud and clear when it comes to our relationship with the Labour Party.

Recruitment

Our tailored 'Know Your Rights' leaflets which we produced last year continue to be popular for use on recruitment stalls and at equality events. We constantly publicise these to regions and branches.

2. National Disabled Members Committee Work Programme

The motions agreed at UNISON's National Disabled Members Conference 2022 form the basis of the NDMC's annual work programme. The NDMC met in January 2023 and agreed the final work programme. Two sub groups were established, the Representing and Organising members sub group and the Disability Campaigns and Policy sub group. They met regularly to take this work forward as follows:

Representing and Organising Disabled Workers

Motions 1, 2, 5, 11, 22, 23 and motions 3, 4, 6, 9, 20, 21 and EM2 (none of these were reached)

Securing the legacy of the year of disabled workers



As outlined above, much of our work this year has been to build on the success of 2022. As part of the learning from this, we undertook a survey of regions to understand what they had done as part of the Year of Disabled Workers and what could be done differently in future initiatives. It was clear from the results that although there was some excellent work undertaken, some regions were more involved than others.

We followed up with service groups to ensure motions passed as part of the year were followed up on and the promised actions implemented. Many of these related to raising awareness of our key bargaining resources on reasonable adjustments and disability leave.

Our disabled members officers and contacts training has now become a regular fixture and we built on this to develop two new Organising Guides. Our 'Becoming a Disabled Members Officer' organising guide and our 'How

to set up a Branch Disabled Members SOG' organising guide have both been developed with member input and we hope they will be useful to those starting out in the role in their branch.

Access to Work

Building on the success of last year's event, the committee ran two further sessions of our Access to Work webinar. These were very well received by activists and they also allowed us to promote our comprehensive members Guide to Access to Work.

We have continued to attend the Access to Work Stakeholder Group meetings for England, where we have raised the need for a faster roll out of pilots on passporting and electronic claims processes.

Smashing all equality pay gaps

As part of the Year of Black Workers our Black disabled caucus held a very successful webinar on Smashing Disability and Race Pay Gaps in September. The session was chaired by Lola Oyewusi, co-convenor of the Black caucus. Speakers included Kudsia Batool, TUC Head of Equality, Gloria Mills, UNISON National Secretary for Equalities and Tara Thomas, the other co-convenor of our Black caucus. The session took an intersectional approach to pay gaps and a number of concrete actions were outlined that can be taken at a branch and union-wide level. There were also some great questions from attendees who were clearly very committed to taking action locally.

We ensured UNISON's 2023 Summer Equality Survey included a question on the disability pay gap and, once analysed, we hope to use the results in our future campaigning on this issue. We also used our social media and eBulletin to raise awareness of the TUC's November disability pay gap day.

We built on our previous Quick Guide to Equality Pay Gaps by creating a brand new stand alone guide to bargaining on the Disability Pay Gap and we hope regions and members will help us to disseminate this widely.

Mental health awareness training

We have liaised with the newly launched UNISON College to audit and improve the different mental health training courses currently available to branches and have used the eBulletin to circulate details to disabled members.

Impact of Covid 19 and Long Covid

We undertook a survey into our disabled members workplace experience to understand the impact of the pandemic. Much of the responses mirrored those we received to our 2019 survey, with surprisingly similar levels of disabled workers still not receiving the adjustments they need. In this respect, Covid hasn't changed anything, with 74% of members not receiving some or all of the adjustments they needed and almost a quarter (23%) of those who were told they could have adjustments finding that they waited for a year or more for them to be delivered.

However, what has changed since Covid is the level of home and hybrid working. Our survey found that 43% of our disabled members are now working from home more than they did before the pandemic. However 21% had been turned down for home working or made to come to the workplace more than they wanted - with the biggest employer argument being the need for "bums on seats". Supporting our members to work from home where this is their choice remains a priority and we have updated and circulated our Working from Home and Hybrid Working Bargaining Guide.



Delegates at last year's conference focusing on pay and cost of living

UNISON responded to the government's consultation on flexible working and in July new rules were finally passed to allow flexible working requests to be made from day one of employment and for the number of requests allowed to be increased to two a year. Although this is welcome progress, this does not fully deliver on UNISON's call for a default right to flexible working, which we will continue to push for.

There were other motions on Covid 19 not reached at last year's conference. A call to lobby for Long Covid to be a named condition in the Equality Act 2010 was not in line with previous policy and the committee therefore concentrated on raising awareness that Long Covid should already be covered by the Equality Act if it has a substantive impact on day to day activities.

Trans Ally Training

This year the National Disabled Members Committee made trans inclusion a priority. In line with the suggestion in last year's motion, we asked Emma Proctor from the national LGBT+ Committee to deliver the excellent Trans Allies training to the full committee meeting in January. This was a hugely informative and stereotype-busting session which committee members fully participated in.

As a result of the session, it was agreed that in future meetings members would not just introduce themselves and the region or caucus they represent but that they would also confirm their gender, on a voluntary basis. This is to make it easier for trans and non-binary members to feel able to confirm their preferred gender if they want to, and so that our committee is a safe and inclusive space for all our disabled members. In addition to this, we also circulated UNISON's Why Pronouns Matter factsheet to regions and to members via the eBulletin.

Self organisation – nothing about us without us

As suggested by the motion, we surveyed all regional disabled members committees to understand current practice in terms of reserved seats for Black, LGBT+ and women members on each of their committee or group structures and in terms of the funding they receive to undertake activities.

The results showed that many regions do not operate a committee structure and instead only hold open meetings where any members can attend. For those that do have a committee structure, some have reserved seats. It is for each region to decide themselves how they organise and a report of the survey has been produced and circulated to each regional group for discussion.

Work has also been undertaken to understand the racial diversity of national SOG committees. 31% of the current National Disabled Members Committee are Black members, which is higher than the national LGBT+ committee (13%) and the National Women's Committee (21%). On the basis of this information, a sub group of the NDMC has considered what

steps can be taken to ensure this level of representation is also reflected in elections to the chairs group of four.

Workplace Disability Equality Standard (WDES)

As part of our *Disable Inequality* campaign, we have continued to sit on the WDES Steering Group which developed the ten measures of disabled workers' experience of the NHS in England and oversees the annual data collection and publication of results. We worked with colleagues in our Health service group in order to avoid a suggestion that the WDES data might no longer be published on a Trust basis and we were relieved when the data was published in the end.



Our stall at Health conference where we showcased the WDES

We attended Health conference where we ran an interactive activity about the ten measures in the WDES and how branches can use the data to achieve equality for disabled workers.

Building on this, we went on to develop a new training session on how to use the WDES which we piloted in two separate workshops for regional organisers and branch activists. The feedback from both these sessions was very positive and we have now agreed to roll the training out on a regional basis, starting with Greater London.

We also responded to the NHS consultation on their new draft Disability Guidance. We made detailed comments to strengthen guidelines on deadlines for reasonable adjustments and the provision of disability leave.

Hybrid meetings and conferences

Although neither of the motions on this issue were reached, we produced a guide on making hybrid meetings accessible for our members and we offered a hybrid option for network meetings in June and August on a pilot basis. It's fair to say the pilot wasn't entirely successful, with barriers remaining for some participants accessing the meeting virtually, and some concerns from those attending in person too. We will consider feedback received before looking at further steps.

We have worked with the conference team to look at the potential for future hybrid conferences. Issues identified that need addressing before this can be taken forward include: the need to find a voting system that would count votes in the room and online; ensuring the security of delegate voting; ensuring the confidentiality of delegates and that the conference is not broadcast to non-eligible people; and how it ensure any system works for all UNISON conferences. As yet solutions have not been identified for some of these and the work by the conference team remains ongoing.

We also met with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and fed into their work on new guidance for hybrid working, raising some of the barriers and concerns our members have shared with us.

Support our NEC reps

We met the president to make clear our support for our NEC reps and we called for comments referred to in the emergency motion (which was not reached) to be withdrawn. Our NEC reps continue to do a great job in raising disabled members' concerns and holding the NEC to account.

Disability Policy and Campaigns

Motions 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19 and EM1 and motion 18 (not reached)

Cost of living crisis

Throughout the year we worked with UNISON's Policy team to ensure the national campaign on the cost of living included key messages about the impact on disabled people. We amplified the UNISON campaign and also publicised a number of reports highlighting the disproportionate impact on disabled people.



The disability pay gap means that disabled people are already paid around £3,700 less than non-disabled people so the impact of the current crisis is exacerbated. With this in mind, we renewed our work on the Disability Employment Charter, which includes a call for mandatory publication of the disability pay gap for all employers with over 250 staff. With over 150 employers now signed up to this, we are demonstrating to government that this is not “unnecessary red tape” but is supported by employers as a way of reducing the pay inequalities disabled people face.

In terms of more practical help, we also used our eBulletin to directly inform disabled members about help UNISON offers for those struggling to make ends meet.

Protecting disabled people's human rights

Last year's conference agreed a motion to defend the Human Rights Act but in fact the battle moved to a different law – the Retained European

Union Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. This draft law would have put the rights disabled people get from the Equality Act 2010 under threat as many of these rights are backed up by European court decisions. This would also impact other equality groups.

We worked closely with UNISON's Policy team to develop briefings for MPs and Lords so that they could make the arguments in the houses of parliament as this Bill was being debated. In particular we pointed to the threat of narrowing the definition of a disabled person which EU Law helps to interpret. We produced an article for UNISON's website explaining this in more detail so that members could help by raising this with their MPs.

After a significant campaign of lobbying we were delighted when government eventually quietly shelved the Bill. However we know that as long as this government is in place our rights will always be at risk so we remain on alert for any diminution of the Equality Act 2010.

We know we need to strengthen protections against this kind of attack, as well as expanding disabled people's rights, and that's why we have long campaigned for the incorporation of the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) into UK law. We worked with UNISON Labour Link to draft amendments to the documents considered at the Labour Party National Policy Forum (NPF) and after some hard negotiation from our UNISON delegation, we were absolutely delighted that UNISON won a commitment from the party to delivering on our obligations under the UNCRPD. We now need to ensure this pledge makes its way into the final Labour Party manifesto but without UNISON we wouldn't have had it referred to at all so the Labour Link has certainly delivered for our disabled members.

Accessible and inclusive mental health and addiction services

We contributed to the UNISON response to the government consultation on mental health and wellbeing just before our conference last year and we again used this as an opportunity to highlight the need for a stronger right to reasonable adjustments and disability leave, as well as highlighting the need for investment in tailored BSL mental health services. In line with last year's conference debate on men's mental health, UNISON also called for investment in suicide prevention, which disproportionately impacts men.

Government published their response to the consultation in May this year and they have started with focusing on suicide prevention, which is welcome. However we will continue to look for further action to come out of this work.

With our popular Mental Health Bargaining Guide now revamped and expanded to include a model mental health policy, we have been alerting branches to the need to bargain on mental health in our regular eBulletins and by taking hard copies to all UNISON conferences.

The Deaf caucus prioritised finding ways of signposting help for both mental health and addiction problems for members who have BSL as a first language. The caucus succeeded in ensuring that the details of Sign Health, a Deaf charity which provides counselling via BSL, were added to the Health and Safety pages of the UNISON website which list support for those experiencing addiction. The caucus also worked with our charity There for You and contact details have been added to the There for You Directory of Services which is used by both staff and branch welfare officers.

Accessible transport

In September we responded to the consultation on closing railway ticket offices where we highlighted the impact this would have on our disabled members who use rail services to travel to work and in order to live an independent life. We argued that staffed ticket offices are necessary in order to ensure disabled passengers get the best value deals, that ticket machines aren't fully accessible, and that disabled people (and in particular those who are Deaf, sight impaired or have mobility issues) require a specific place to go for help, rather than having to search the station. We made clear that UNISON objected to all station ticket office closures and to any reduction in station staff. There was an unprecedented response to the consultation and we are hopeful that the rail companies will see sense.

We also wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport outlining both our opposition to the ticket office closures and raising other issues relating to accessible transport. In line with motions from last year's conference, we called for government to bring forward the deadline for tactile strips to be installed on all station platforms, for free parking for Blue Badge holders in public car parks such as hospitals, and for new guidelines to ensure electric vehicle charging points are fully accessible to disabled people.

Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

We produced a new Members Guide to PIP and Adult Disability Payment which we hope will offer assistance to members facing the very complex and difficult process of applying for help to live independently. This comprehensive guide sits alongside our very successful Members Guide to Access to Work and both are available on the online catalogue for use by

stewards and members. We also continue to publicise our more accessible Quick Guide to PIP which remains a popular and easy way of getting a basic understanding of how PIP works.

We responded to the consultation on phasing out work capability assessments and instead making the PIP assessment the main route to receiving disability support for those who are out of work.

We also wrote to the Secretary of State demanding that the Department of Work and Pensions start to collect ethnicity data on PIP applicants so that they can assure us that there is fairness and equality in the system and Black applicants are not disproportionately turned down for help.

As part of our work with the Labour Party in the run up to the next election, we included the need to reform PIP to accurately capture the extra cost of being disabled in a detailed reference to the Labour Link outlining the key areas where we need to influence the party if they win power.

BSL Act

After years of UNISON campaigning, we welcomed the new BSL Act and some preliminary moves by government to start to implement this, including starting work to develop a new GCSE in BSL.

We continued to circulate our very popular Stewards Guide to Representing Deaf (native BSL) Members which is available online and in hard copy on the UNISON online catalogue.

Women's Health Strategy

The government produced their Women's Health Strategy just after our conference last year. Progress on delivery has however been slow and the women's caucus continue to monitor the situation. UNISON responded to the original consultation, in particular raising the impact of the menopause on women's health and the need for a gender sensitive approach to sickness absence. Government announced a survey on women and girls' reproductive health and we have used the eBulletin and social media to encourage our disabled women members to respond.

As called for in the motion, we have continued to circulate UNISON's Negotiating on Sickness Absence guide and our Disability leave Bargaining Guide. We are also working with the Centre for Progressive Change on a campaign to increase and expand access to sick pay. We ensured this point was covered in a recent Fabians report commissioned by UNISON.

Barriers to employment

Last year's motion on this subject highlighted the need to reform Access to Work and to call for mandatory publication of the disability pay gap. These are both asks in the Disability Employment Charter, of which we are a founding member, and we now have 150 employers signed up and agreeing that government should take action on both of these.

We produced a briefing document in advance of the Labour Party National Policy Forum (NPF) negotiations which argued that an incoming government needs to take action on the disability pay gap and we very much welcomed the inclusion of a commitment to mandatory publication in the final NPF document. We will continue to push for this to make its way into the final manifesto in the run up to the next election.

The national officer presented to the TUC's cross-union Procurement and Outsourcing working group on the charter's calls for all public sector contracts to require the employment of disabled people and to go beyond the Public Sector Equality Duty. This formed part of UNISON's work on developing amendments to the Procurement Bill requiring a public interest test to be met before outsourcing decisions are taken. This was ultimately not accepted by government but we are working towards getting a commitment from the Labour Party on this.

We undertook a survey last year on members' experience of applying for Access to Work. Only 22% (one in five) had applied for Access to Work, underlining the concern that not enough is being done to make disabled workers aware of the support they could be eligible for. However, around half of those who applied said they didn't get any or all of the help they needed. By far the biggest issue faced by our members was huge waiting times and we have continued to call for more investment in the system. Other issues raised included the impact on low paid workers of having to make up front payment for taxis and the problem of employers refusing to implement Access to Work recommendations.

Our response to the government's new Disability Action Plan includes renewed calls for investment in Access to Work, the need for up front payments and for employers to abide by recommendations, and action on the pay gap.

We have also worked with the House of Lords Public Services Committee enquiry into reducing barriers to young people's employment and have submitted evidence on this, including highlighting the importance of retention as well as recruitment, with lack of access to reasonable

adjustments meaning some disabled young people struggle to keep a job they have had to fight hard to get.

Covid 19 and disability inclusion in the workplace

We built very strong relationships with UNISON's health and Safety team during the pandemic and we have again worked closely with them this year. We have ensured air quality and ventilation is included in UNISON's advice and we also fed into the Bargaining Support Unit's updated guide for those previously shielding.

We have also supported stewards representing members with Long Covid through our updated guide on Long Covid. We continue to campaign for government and employers to raise awareness that many workers with Long Covid are already covered by the Equality Act 2010 where there is a substantial impact on normal day to day activities.

3. Conference Reports

National Delegate Conference 2023

Graeme and I thank you for nominating us to represent the Disabled Members SOG and to move and speak on motions relevant to disabled members.

NDC was held in Liverpool from the 13th – 16th June 2023. Graeme and I were both staying at the same hotel, which proved beneficial for having breakfast together and also going between the conference centre and the hotel.



Susan Parkinson moves our motion at NDC

This year the conference was very well attended, and both Graeme and I had our reasonable adjustments met as requested, and we were able to access our tables/monitors without any issues or concerns but this was not the case for all disabled delegates.

The motion and amendment that Susan moved were as follows:

A8.1 – Harrassment – Not part of the job

M56 – Securing the legacy of the Year of the Disabled Worker

Interestingly, the amendment was moved on the first day of NDC, our Motion 56 was the last motion to be moved on the last day of conference.

Graeme Moved amendment 28.1. All were clearly carried, and it was a successful conference.

Graeme appealed the decision to rule our motion 'Men and Mental Health' out of order. The appeal was not upheld but he got some useful guidance from Standing Orders Committee on raising the issue within NEC.

There was one card vote which was carried, but the decision to go to a card vote in the hope that it would be in the favour of the NEC was lost and again conference voice was heard loud and clear.

Toby who was the editor of the newsheet, did extremely well, and we were very proud of our news sheet. Unfortunately, most regions had decided to put their news sheets on the App or other social medias this was not accessible for all, and lots of comments were made, and our news sheet was very welcomed by all delegates.

Using other ways to share news sheets is welcome, but it should be assessible for all. By the end of the week, more regions had decided to do paper copies as well, which was a step in the right direction.

Lots of very good stalls, but equally very busy, and it was difficult to navigate, especially, with a disability. Prices within the venue, again always expensive. There was a large number of focus/SOG groups and to be honest too many to choose from. Susan tried to go to as many as possible, and Graeme did likewise.

Food was provided at the majority of the focus groups/SOG meetings, and this was very welcome, although there was no food allergies listed on the food items, it was a case of beware just in case you did have an allergy.

We chaired the two Disabled Members Meetings which were held on Tuesday lunch time and Thursday after close of conference, both were well supported, and there were concerns raised over reasonable adjustments not being met even after requesting them through OCS.

Graeme and Susan discussed perhaps a guide on how to request reasonable adjustments in good time, especially, with our own National Disabled Members Conference later this year. We should be encouraging, disabled members to attend. Some disabled members also requested paper copies, again, this process was not something, that is easily accomplished. We need to look at all ways to request reasonable adjustments and that they will hopefully be met.

Overall from our perspective, NDC was great, lots of opportunities for networking and catching up with old and young friends.

Thank you also to other NDMC who supported us.

Graeme Ellis and Susan Parkinson

TUC Disabled Workers Conference

Our delegation, consisted of Lola Oyewusi, Sonya Howard, Linda Woods, Sian Stockham, Graeme Ellis, Steve Gaucci, Iain Scott-Burdon and myself, along with the national and assistant national officers. Unfortunately Susan Parkinson and Tansaim Hussein-Gul were unable to attend.

At our delegation meeting on Monday 10th July, I was asked by the group to act as delegation lead. Thank you those who “encouraged me”.

We agreed our positions on motions and who would speak, it was agreed not to speak on every motion and only where UNISON had policy or we felt we could influence.

Lola opened up conference motions moving motion 1 which was our motion “Together we Rise” which was passed. I then seconded the motion from the CSP, who agreed to our amendment to strengthen Comp 3 on How disabled people are being failed. Sonya spoke on the cost-of-living motion from TSSA.

Graeme spoke in support of motion 5 Defending the rights of disabled workers post Covid.



The UNISON TUC Disabled Workers Conference delegation

Steve spoke on the motion about the importance of reasonable adjustments in the workplace from the GMB and Royal College of Podiatry, highlighting that UNISON’s template passport uses the Social Model of Disability not the medical model.

Following on from this Linda spoke on funding for adjustments for NHS Staff and the work UNISON has done with the NHS to introduce the Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES).

Iain spoke on accessible public transport he covered the closure of rail ticket offices and how that would leave him without support. There was also any emergency motion on this subject with all unions speaking in support.

Sian spoke on the motion encouraging more disabled workers in education brought by the NEU. She highlighted the work of school support staff and underlined that UNISON are the largest union for school support staff.

We also spoke on the motion for inclusive and accessible work places, highlighting that hybrid conferences should not be used as an excuse to stop delegates attending face to face conferences.

I would like to pass my thanks on behalf of the delegation to all the work Anne and Deidre put in to organise this year's delegation.

Carl Phillips
Delegation Lead

National Labour Link Forum

The Forum took place on 7th July 2023 in Newcastle. It was a full day of packed with motions, speakers and workshops.

Motions:

A variety of motions were up for debate and the focus was very much on what an incoming Labour Government would do in terms of supporting UNISON members. To also ensure UNISON policies will influence a new Labour Government going forward.

There were several amendments all supported and with no composites. Motions were as follows;

- Rebuilding Public Services
- Ending Social Care Crisis
- Local Government Finances
- Fairer Funding For Local Government
- Private Renters Deserve Rights to a Secure, Decent, Affordable Homes.
- Public Ownership of Critical Business infrastructure and transport
- Fire and Rescue Services and Funding.
- Menopause Awareness
- Bereavement Leave
- Defend the Right to Strike
- Stop Bogus Self-Employment Exploiting Workers
- The Road to the Next General Election
- 2023 Year of the Black Workers
- Tick Boxes but not Occupying Seats- Stop Leaving BAME people Behind.
- Support Disabled People's Activism, Including Standing for Public Office.
- Transgender Rights
- Branch Labour Link Officers and Local Labour Election Manifesto.

Graeme raised the recent announcement on the Rail Ticket office closure, with a view to have an emergency motion however this was brought up in his contribution to motion on Public ownership. Sonya tried to speak on Menopause Awareness and the impact this has on disabled women.

Both our motion on Support Disabled Peoples' Activism moved by Graeme; and the amendment to Branch Labour Link Officers moved by Sonya, were successfully carried.

Graeme spoke on the need to have buildings to be more accessible and adaptations. Sonya spoke on promoting through Labour Link the need for all Labour Councils to adopt the Disability Employment Charter, supported by UNISON one of the charter's co-founders.

Speakers:

Speakers included our General Secretary Christina McAnea who began forum with an exhilarating speech on UNISON's involvement to help forming Labour Party policies.

Bridgit Phillipson MP (Shadow Education Minister) who spoke on Labour's policies on Schools, Personal Independence Payments and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in schools.

Anwar Sarwar MSP Leader of Scottish Labour Party who mainly spoke about his views on a Labour victory in Scotland and his commitment to achieving this.

Workshop

We broke up into three groups to discuss the policy on 'Labour's New Deal, for Working People'. The policy was widely well received and the positive impact this on the future for all workers and the Trade Union movement. These would be put in place in the first one hundred days of Labour being in office.

Sonya fed-back from a group to the main forum, stating that all workers will acquire rights from day one; such as flexible working that will improve support for disabled workers. Repealing the Anti-Trade Union laws and strengthen rights to raising pay and conditions. Ending of fire and re-hire and to ban Zero Hour contracts, ensuring everyone has the right to regular hours they can rely on.

All motions were passed and the Forum was friendly and the general feeling was that the future was bright, onward and upwards to ensure we work towards electing a Labour Government. That would improve all our working lives.

Sonya Howard and Graeme Ellis

Annual Report from NEC Members

As you probably know there were NEC elections earlier this year. Angela and Katrina were both very proud to have been re-elected to represent Disabled Members on the NEC and we would like to thank everyone who voted for us. We are committed to being an accountable and united team for Disabled Members. We've created a new Facebook page, Disabled Members' united NEC Team, where we will share NEC reports and other information you might find interesting.



NEC reps Angela Hamilton and Katrina Murray

Sadly, we have lost Sian Stockham from our NEC team on National Disabled Members Committee (NDMC) as she did not stand in the NEC elections this year. We would like to thank Sian for all her hard work and support over the years. We are also delighted that she will continue to work with NDMC through her role on the TUC Disabled Workers Committee. We would also like to ask you to join us in congratulating Sian for receiving an OBE in the New Year's Honour's list. Sian was recognised for her political and public service and we're sure you will all agree this is very well deserved.

Joining our team on NDMC as the third NEC rep is Denise Thomas. Denise represents the Community Sector on the NEC and brings with her a perspective that we will all benefit from.

During National Delegate Conference (NDC) Katrina and Angela attended NEC meetings at 8.30 every morning before the start of conference. On Thursday morning we asked the NEC to consider re-prioritising the Disabled Members motion 'Securing the legacy of the year of Disabled Workers.' Unfortunately the NEC decided not to do this but with a lot of hard work from ourselves and the Disabled Members delegates to NDC we managed to get it re-prioritised for the final afternoon of conference. The motion was heard and passed unanimously and we will both be pushing the NEC to complete the actions in the motion.

After NDC ended the new NEC met for the first time to elect the new Presidential Team. The candidates were:

President – Davena Rankin and Libby Nolan

Vice-President – James Anthony and Steve North Vice-President – Manjula Kumari and Julia Mwaluke

We both voted for Davena, James and Manjula. The voting was very close with Libby, Steve and Julia winning by just one or two votes each.

We have always tried to make sure we are on different sub-committees to ensure that Disabled Members voices are heard. This year the Presidential Team have respected this and we have been allocated the following committees:

Angela: Policy Development and Campaigns Committee (PDCC) and Staffing **Katrina:** Development and Organising (D&O) and Finance and Resource Management Committee (FRMC)

Denise: International Committee, Welfare Board Trustee and NDMC

In our report last year, we commented up how challenging the NEC and committee meetings had been. Whilst the new NEC hasn't met properly (at time of writing), we are hoping that the frustrations of the last couple of years have lessened and that NEC is properly equipped to challenge the anti-trade union and anti-equality actions of the Government and not spend the next two years fighting each other. You have our commitment that we are wanting to work across the NEC to make UNISON the best union for Disabled Workers.

One of our priorities over the last year has been to get some progress on the Reasonable Adjustments passports. There have been significant challenges in recognising how complex this is and how much of a barrier it is to Disabled Members involvement in the union at all levels. This is much more complex in UNISON than our employers as we need to consider adjustments which cope with overnight accommodation, significant travel and the social model of disability.

We have sought feedback from people about their experiences of getting reasonable adjustments and it is clear that the issue doesn't just lie at a National Office level but branches also need to be fully inclusive and recognise that it can cost more for Disabled delegates to attend conferences. This is a big piece of work for us and will be our priority over the next year.

Additionally, over the coming months we will be working hard to make sure Disabled Members issues are seen as a priority by the NEC.

Things we will be working on include:

- Securing the legacy of the Year of Disabled Workers
- Feeding into the COVID inquiry
- Changes to travel for people receiving PIP – see motion 19
- The disability pay and employment gap

Finally, please feel free to come and speak to us during conference or email us if there is anything you would like us to raise with the NEC.

We hope you have a fantastic conference.

Angela Hamilton and Katrina Murray

Local Government Conference

Local Government Conference this year was a whirlwind, though it felt to both of us like we didn't get through nearly enough motions, compared to what we usually would. At Local Government Conference we chaired the Disabled Members fringe meeting, with support from Angela Hamilton – who was also in attendance at the conference.

NDMC had two motions on the agenda but unfortunately, we didn't reach them in the allotted time we did have so they fell onto the snake, and for that last bit of conference we were mentally willing business to go through more quickly so we could reach our motions which we felt were really important and had planned our speeches for to move the motions.

On Sunday morning at the conference Lisa Nandy MP, and Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities gave a speech.

An emergency motion was allowed onto the conference agenda, which was heard on Monday – Emergency Motion 1: Education cuts in Northern Ireland, which discussed the escalating levels of cuts in education in Northern Ireland and the severe impact of an imposed budget that UNISON members are facing. This motion was carried.

We were very near the end of business thinking that we were not going to reach our motions at all, but the very last motion of Local Government Conference that we did reach was Motion 27 – the motion that Nici was due to move.

Nici Moran: “Motion 27 - Fighting cuts to local services and protecting disabled workers' jobs: I nervously moved this motion to conference and thankfully it was carried with lots of support on the conference floor. It was my first time moving a motion at any conference, despite speaking at conferences before and chairing at Disabled Members Conference in 2022 - I was thankful for the support and glad we reached the motion but unfortunately, we did not reach Tony's motion, which was the motion after mine on the snake (Time to listen to disabled local government workers – reasonable adjustments NOW!), I was really gutted for Tony who had worked very hard on his speech and for us as a committee because of how important the issue is for disabled members. I suggested that we should share Tony's fantastic speech with the National Committee, as someone should get to see it”.

Nici Moran and Tony Slaven

Health Conference

Conference took place in Bournemouth 17th – 19th April. Sandie and I were your nominated delegates to represent National Disabled Members Committee, we had 1 NDMC motion and 1 amendment to move. They both went through.

There were two Composites

- A (Motions 9,10, 11) Agenda for Change
- B (Motions 21,22) Health, Safety, and well-being

There were two Emergency Motions:

- No 1 NHS Pay offer for England 2022-24
- No 2 The NHS Team is One Team – No separate pay spine for nurses.

Monday 17th April Opening Session

The conference was held in the Windsor Hall. Opening address by Andrea Egan UNISON President. Standing Orders Committee First Report was address by Wilma Brown – Chair of SGEC. Speakers were Anita Charlesworth, Director of Research and Economics. The Health Foundation and Kate Bell, Assistant General Secretary, TUC. Both speakers were warmly received and were extremely informative.

Meeting for Disabled Members

Love been thrown into the deep end, best way to learn lol. Didn't realise myself & Abdul were chairing the meeting so didn't have anything to go off. Various questions were asked about Disabled Members Passport - Katrina Murray dealt with this.

Quiet room was asked about and no one seemed to know where this was or if there was one - I asked this to be mentioned when Conference started the next morning but was not mentioned as they didn't know if they was a quiet room within conference at all.

A few members came forward asking if they could help in any way on the new data protection laws, passed member onto Katrina Murray.

Next time would it be possible to have a standard agenda so we can let members know more information, regarding Motions put forward by Disabled Members which at the time you forget about.

Keynote speaker - Christina McAnea, General Secretary gave a wonderful speech congratulating all those health workers who had voted

for strike action, and she had attended on the picket line, gave a robust speech about the NHS and proud she was that we are stronger together.

Motions for debate included Agenda for change terms and conditions. Overall, a remarkably busy and satisfying first day of conference.

Tuesday 18th April

Due to the acceptance of the government pay award for NHS staff instead the General Secretary called all striking ambulance branches to come to the front of the hall for photo opportunities and they received an overwhelming standing ovation.

Abdul attended the NHS Pensions focus group, it was oversubscribed, and many had to be turned away, the room allocated was too small, but I was successful in obtaining a sea near the front.

Guest Speaker - Baba Aye, Health, and Social Sector Officer, Public Services International - Baba was warmly welcomed and provided a real in-depth insight to what was happening internationally in relation to Health and Social Care, again well received and an interesting speech.



Wednesday 19th April

International Workers Memorial Day Commemoration Remember the dead, fight for the living. Presentation on member engagement project was unfortunately cancelled due to sickness absence of presenter.

CLOSE OF CONFERENCE

The Conference was remarkably successful and was informative for all in attendance. The motions were relevant to everyone, and fringe/caucus meetings also had a wide range of topics to enable everyone to participate and take ideas back to their branches/workplaces.

The venue was ok, but not suitable for disabled people. Hopefully, this has been noted and we will not return to Bournemouth again as it has additional issues with hills and location. There was a lot of stalls which was very pleasing, as some conferences cannot accommodate many stalls. The food at the venue was reasonable but overpriced, fortunately, local shops were not far away to walk. There were numerous water fountains, and these were very welcome. There was a social event with quiz and raffle, I did not on this occasion attend, but it was successful.

Thank you for nominating Sandie and I to be your representatives, at National Health Care Services Conferences. We hope you have enjoyed reading our report.

Abdul Rahman and Sandie Robinson

Energy Conference

UNISON's energy conference took place on 12 June and was opened in Liverpool by Andrea Egan, vice president and conference chair. There was 13 motions submitted and all passed unanimously. The National disabled members self-organised group had two motions, Motion 3 Effects of Long covid in Energy workplace which was moved by Tansaim and Motion 13 Men and Mental health in the energy sector which was moved by Jane who was a first-time speaker at this conference.

The region's metro mayor, Steve Rotherham spoke about the region's efforts toward decarbonisation and greening of its economy. He stated that since he was elected as metro mayor he has been working together with the people of Liverpool, for a better, fairer greener future for the people who call this place their home. He went on to explain that in 2019 their area was the first to declare a climate emergency and set our carbon neutral target to 2040 a full decade ahead of wider targets. He also said, let's be clear – overcoming climate change is not something that can be accomplished by any one region, by the UK or even by Europe. It's an existential threat on a global scale like nothing we've seen before Mr Rotherham then spoke of a number of projects being undertaken in the region around carbon capture, tidal power, the creation of a carbon neutral London-style public transport system including hydrogen-powered buses and battery-powered trains, and the retro-fitting of domestic properties to increase the energy efficiency of thousands of homes.

Bill Esterson, Labour MP for Sefton, joined as the second guest speaker and spoke about how Labour is fully committed to decarbonising our economy and to making the most of the opportunities right across the low carbon energy mix, right across the decarbonisation of industry and those opportunities of reducing customer's bills in insulation. He noted Labour's plans to spend billions of pounds a year to insulate homes and outlined Labour's commitment to end the ban on onshore wind farms, to double onshore wind, triple solar and quadruple offshore wind.

UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea stated how energy is a hot topic of political debate right now in parliament. Record high energy price increases have hammered family finances and put a lot of families in financial turmoil in deciding to heat their homes or eat. While many energy companies' profits have boomed. She went on to say how we are the fifth richest nation in the world, but we've got the most energy inefficient housing stock in Western Europe. If our advice on energy policy had been heeded, we wouldn't be in this crisis, and we wouldn't be watching many more coming our way. Christina spoke of the launch of *Gridlock*, she said: So, we're warning, once again – about the elitist energy economy this government is creating.

Greener homes are beyond the reach of many, because of inadequate government help. To turn this around, public investment is an absolute priority. 75% of our members who responded to the survey said they could not afford to take up any of the government's incentives, and so the money available goes to those who don't need it, exacerbating the inequalities we already see, and creating an ever more elitist energy system.

Tansaim Hussain-Gul and Jane Brooks

WET Conference Report

Conference was opened by Ruth Davies, Chair of the WET Service Group Executive. Ruth spoke about the cost-of-living crisis and effects of this to members and how we need Health & Safety Reps now more than ever. The Water Sector Chair then spoke about issues within the industry, the Environment Agency provided updates on their continued strike action and the Transport Chair highlighted pay negotiations and how employers were wishing to move towards local negotiation. The Guest Speaker for Conference was Jon Richards, Assistant General Secretary. All 13 motions for WET were carried and one emergency motion was submitted and carried.

Heather Briggs and Anthony Hill

Community Conference

The motion that was sent to conference (motion 14) was passed unanimously. Several speeches were made in favour of the motion, with particular reference to the hard work of the committee last year that made the Year of the Disabled Worker a success.

During the Disabled Members' Caucus, a wide ranging discussion was had around the accessibility of accommodation at conferences, with issues being raised around branches not always paying for suitable accommodation to meet disabled members' needs, such as level access and / or accommodation being a substantial distance away from the conference venue.

In relation to the amount being given to delegates by some branches, it was felt that this is not always reflective of the actual costs associated, particularly with regards to the additional costs incurred by disabled member delegates.

Toby Morrison

Higher Education Conference

We were pleased to be elected at the Disabled members conference in October 2022 to represent disabled members at the Higher education delegates in Newcastle in February. Sanchia moved the motion on securing the legacy of UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers 2022, to continue to work to improve the experience of disabled members and we are pleased to say that it passed unanimously.

The union used the Year of Disabled Workers to highlight the important contribution disabled members make to the union, to improve terms and conditions for disabled workers, including in higher education, and to campaign for improved rights for all disabled workers.

The speech highlighted that employers need to do more to address the barriers that disabled staff face, in being appointed into more senior level positions in our workplaces. They need to redouble their efforts to eliminate the different outcomes for staff by addressing these imbalances, robustly and sustainably. The majority of disabled staff in universities are concentrated in the lower grades in our workplaces. Even when they do progress, they reach a plateau and do not progress at the same rate as their non-disabled counterparts. We also need workplaces to investigate further the starting salaries of new staff who are appointed, to see whether there is a disparity between the salaries of disabled and non-disabled staff. All other motions debated were passed – there was lively debate on the motion about aggregating the ballot for strike pay. We also heard from two guest speakers around the important work that the union is doing to highlight the issues that disabled workers face and that indeed the fight goes on for equality.

We found attending the conference both informative and enjoyable and with the motions passed have a clear agenda of how we move forward on the issues of equality and pay.

Sanchia Alasia and Mark Harvey

Police and Justice Conference

The conference was opened by UNISON vice president Libby Nolan and the first day of the conference passed several motions relating to pay and the cost of living crisis, cuts in the probation service, challenging sexism, harassment and misogyny, a demand to mandate ethnicity pay gap reporting among police forces and a call to campaign for extra funding to increase PCSO numbers.

Andy spoke in support of Motion 12 - Social Model of Disability in Policing, and moved Motion 13 – Securing the legacy of the year of disabled workers in Police and Justice workplaces.

We also had a talk from Thompsons on the PIM process and finished the conference with Ben Priestly updating conference about the £1900 pay rise to bring us in line with the police officer award. As the conference closed and we were advised that next year's conference would be in Edinburgh.

Andy felt it was an honour to stand in and move a motion on behalf of disabled members. Even though it wasn't his first time attending a conference it was his first time speaking and moving a motion and we are very pleased to say that the motion was passed unanimously.

Margaret Gilmurray and Andy Crossley co-chaired the disabled members caucus at the conference which was well attended. As part of the meeting, we were looking for a volunteer to support motion 11, but the conference business had run smoothly and the motion had already been heard.

There was much discussion around the use of disability leave and employers having disability passports.

Delegates were encouraged to get involved in the disabled members group and this work of the group was explained.

The disabled members conference was also discussed, it was noted that the time to attend as a delegate had passed but visitor places would still be available.

Andy Crossley (delegate for Disabled Members SOG) and Mags Gilmurray (NDMC member and P&J branch delegate, assisting)

National Black Members Conference

Tansaim Hussain-Gul and Bertha Kanyangu attended this conference on behalf of the National Disabled members SOG in Edinburgh on 20th – 22nd January 2023.

There were 24 motions in total all motions passed with some amendments falling as delegates were not present to move the amendments.

The conference started on a Friday with welcome for first time delegate get together briefing. After this was the first meeting for disabled members, where disabled members raised any concerns they had with hotels, travel, attending the conference venue and making sure all reasonable adjustments were met.

The conference began by Kebba Manneh NBMC Chair welcoming everyone to the first physical Black members conference after 3 years in Covid lockdown. He welcomed Robert Aldridge who is a City of Edinburgh Councillor, Robert Aldridge the city's Lord Provost and Lord Lieutenant. Councillor Aldridge is the Council's longest-serving member with over 30 years' experience.



Our delegates to Black Members Conference

SOC report one was moved by Sharon foster Chair of standing orders committee. There were four references back for amendments to motions ruled out of order due to being beyond the remit of the conference. Out of the four amendments three were referred back to the SOC and one was lost.

In addition to the Lord Provost there were 4 guest speakers:

- Christina McAnea (UNISON General Secretary)
- Rakiya Suleiman (NBMC Activism Journey)
- Andrea Egan (UNISON President)
- Professor Gus John (Writer, Campaigner, Lecturer and Researcher)

Christina McAnea General Secretary stated that there are an estimated 185,000 Black members in UNISON, the majority working in health and local government, and the union has declared 2023 as the Year of Black Workers. Christina said that COVID-19 revealed the truth of institutional racism, for all to see. Black workers are more likely to be on the frontline, more likely to be low-paid, over-exposed to risks, offered less protection and more likely to suffer.

Christina announced the union's mission to "establish a legacy to generate change" with the Year of Black Workers. Our aim is to win fair pay so that you and your families can live the decent lives you deserve, so that our public services can recruit and retain staff and provide the services we all rely on. Christina paid tribute to the many UNISON members who have been taking strike action in recent weeks, she told conference that UNISON has had wall to wall coverage. Newspapers and social media plastered with purple and green images from picket lines across the country.

During the morning session, chaired by Kebba Manneh, we passed motions including motion 5 Black members feeling undervalued and like they don't belong, which was a very interesting debate. A key motion was unanimously passed on Black workers and non-apparent impairments.

Tansaim Hussain-Gul moved motion six Black workers and non-apparent impairments. The NDMC called on the national Black members' committee to emphasise the rights of Black disabled workers with non-apparent and fluctuating impairments. Tansaim spoke about how disability is not just physical. It is mental and invisible. Black people disproportionately experience impairments like lupus, diabetes, and sickle cell, and conditions still awaiting to be official diagnosis.

Supporting this motion also was Bertha Kanyangu. She mentioned how some employers refuse to accept a worker is disabled and entitled to reasonable adjustments unless their impairment is obvious. The motion was unanimously passed.

Bertha moved motion seven Securing the legacy of the year of disabled workers and stating that even though last year was the year of disabled workers but that has not ended is just the beginning and each year will be the year of disabled workers.

After a rousing opening speech from writer and education campaigner Augustin John, in which he urged conference delegates to situate institutional racism between structural racism, conference passed another key motion on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Black low-paid workers.

UNISON presents the award every year to someone who has 'gone above and beyond to represent Black members. Carol Sewell has been presented with the 2023 UNISON Nelson Mandela Award for over two decades of service to the union movement. Andrea Egan, President, presented the award to Ms Sewell at this year's national Black members' conference.

There was a total of 4 fringes and 4 workshops run on Saturday afternoon. The Sunday conference session was chaired by Rakiya Suleiman, deputy chair of the national committee. Overall was a lovely conference and happy it was back in a physical form.

Tansaim Hussain- Gul and Bertha Kanyangu

National Women's Conference

National Black members conference was held in Bournemouth on 16th – 18th February 2023.

Donna and I attended this conference on behalf of the National Disabled Members SOG.

There were 39 motions in total 38 motions passed with some amendments falling as delegates were not present to move the amendments.

The conference started on a Thursday with National Women's Committee meet and greet stall. After this was the first meeting for Black members. This then followed by the various regional meetings.

The conference began by Chair welcoming everyone to the first physical Women's conference after 3 years in Covid lockdown. The Guest speakers for this year's conference were the UNISON President, Andrea Egan, Our General Secretary Christina McAnea and Bridget Phillipson MP, shadow Secretary for Education and responsible for childcare policy.

SOC report one was moved by the Chair of standing orders committee. Guest speaker Christina McAnea General Secretary stated that there are an estimated 185,000 Black members in UNISON, the majority of whom work in health and local government services, and the union has declared 2023 as the Year of Black Workers.

Christina said that COVID-19 revealed the truth, Women workers are more likely to more likely to be low-paid, over-exposed to risks, offered less protection and more likely to suffer. Our aim is to win fair pay so that you and your families can live the decent lives you deserve, so that our public services can recruit and retain staff and provide the services we all rely on.

Christina paid tribute to the many UNISON members who have been taking strike action in recent weeks, she told conference that UNISON has had wall to wall coverage. Newspapers and social media plastered with purple and green images from picket lines across the country.

During the first day of conference, there were two motions that opened conference and they were carried. After these two motions there was a Group debate of motions related to the Cost of Living. I moved our Motion five Disabled Women and the cost-of-living crisis, which was a very interesting debate and so many women spoke in support of all the motions, and they were all carried unanimously. There were also Service Group meetings on the first day of conference.

Motion 20 Dual discrimination and disabled women was moved by Donna and the motion was unanimously carried.

There was a total of 4 fringes and 4 seminars that ran on Friday morning and afternoon. The meeting for Disabled members was held on Friday afternoon where Disabled Members raised any concerns they had with hotels, travel, attending the conference venue and making sure all reasonable adjustments was met.

After this meeting there was Hustings for NDC, this was a very interesting and nerve-racking time for me as I was one of the people that put my name forward for this. There were 3 of us who went forward for this. This was the first time I did this but I am grateful for all the support I received from members of this committee and members of my region. When the outcome of the vote was announced on the last day of conference. Sharon Foster and I are the delegates to go to NDC in June.

Conference ended on Saturday afternoon and some delegates had already left before that due to some trains being cancelled and delegates having to use bus links making their journeys longer to get back home.

Overall was a lovely conference and happy it was back in a physical form.

Bertha Kanyangu and Donna Hollett

National LGBT+ Conference

I arrived on Thursday afternoon to a bleak and rainy Edinburgh, though the rain didn't dampen my spirits in such a beautiful city. After some delicious Lebanese food it was time for an early night after such a long drive, though unfortunately the room wasn't particularly accessible and my requested and approved reasonable adjustments had not been implemented. Unfortunately the hotel couldn't help with this.

I attended the Disabled Members meeting on Friday afternoon slightly late, again due to my reasonable adjustments not being on record and having to re-register my PA and re-request reasonable adjustments at the conference desk, despite my submitting these on time and receiving approval well in advance of conference.

I then attended the Local Government service group meeting. The chairs provided a presentation on priorities on behalf of Mike Short who unfortunately couldn't attend in person due to transport issues. They discussed the aim to submit the new local government pay claim in January for England and Wales. Also discussed was motion themes for LG Conf 2023 and suggestions were taken from the floor.



Following this was the North West regional meeting. A discussion took place on motions and the region voted to pass an emergency motion submitted by the region.

Saturday morning saw the start of conference and the debate of motions. The main theme was Negotiating LGBT+ Equality and covered LGBT+ hate crime and a 'speeding ticket' early resolution approach to discriminatory language within the workplace. Following this, a member of the National Committee moved the international section of the Annual Report and highlighted the importance of supporting Palestine.

We then moved onto the international section of the agenda. Motions debated featured support and solidarity for LGBT+ communities in Ukraine and Ghana.

The debate on motions resumed on Saturday afternoon focusing on the campaigning theme. Delegates moved motions on banning conversion therapy and defending LGBT+ rights.

The National Committee presented a Lifetime achievement award to Jackie Lewis to acknowledge her hard work over the years for the advancement of LGBT+ rights. Keynote speakers at conference were Andrea Egan, Christina McAnea and Julia Ehart.

The conference social was on Saturday evening, but unfortunately being around 30 minutes walk away from my accommodation, I didn't feel able to attend. Edinburgh streets and pavements are not particularly accessible and many times I had to take my mobility scooter onto the road as there were no dropped kerbs, which I felt particularly unsafe doing at night.

Conference was due to start at 9.15am on the Sunday morning, but as a disabled delegate, there was no chance of me getting there for this time given I had to pack, check out, have breakfast and commute to the conference centre. I would hope that the early start time could be reconsidered for future conferences.

On my arrival at EICC, conference were discussing the recruitment and organising section of the agenda. The session saw a grouped debate on making 2024 the year of LGBT+ workers and motions and making the + in LGBT+ positive. Our first real debate at conference was on motion 13, inclusive data collection reform for an inclusive union. This motion called for the addition of new categories to the fair representation and proportionality survey for inclusivity. We heard from speakers both for and against but the motion ultimately was not carried.

Overall I found conference enjoyable and informative, however it felt a little dry in comparison to previous conferences with not very much debate. It was also frustrating that my reasonable adjustments were not in place and I hope this can be investigated to prevent this happening to other delegates for future conferences.

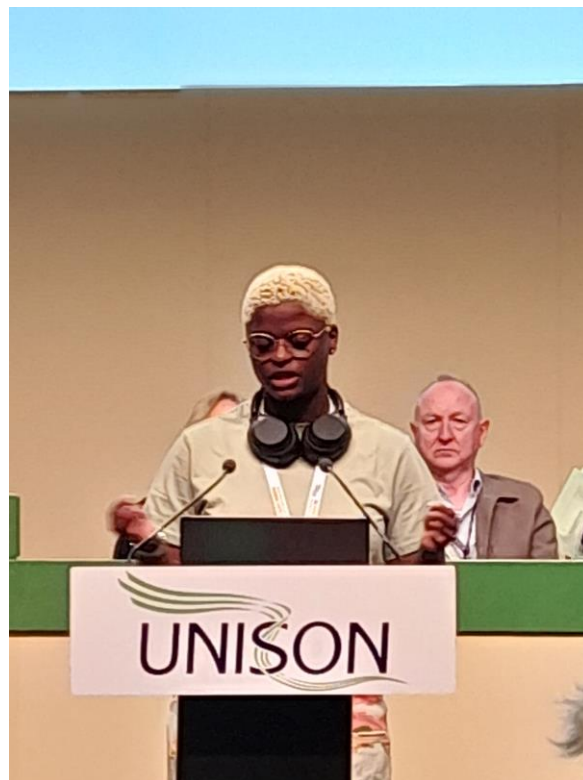
Leigh Fredson

Young Members Conference

The UNISON National Young Members' Conference was held at the Bournemouth Highcliff Marriott from 2nd - 4th December. The formal debates and motions took place in three sessions: two on Saturday, and one on Sunday.

Caucus meetings and workshops took place on Friday and Saturday. Transport difficulties, delays, and cancellations meant Caucus meetings on Friday were poorly attended.

Key Speakers included Amrit Rait, Vice President, UNISON, Daniela Vega Sotelo, Columbian Trade Unionist (FENSUAGRO & Justice for Colombia) and Jon Richards, Assistant Gen. Secretary (Bargaining & Negotiating), UNISON.



Latia was our delegate to Young Members Conference

Amrit said there is a need for greater representation amongst the upper echelons of UNISON structures, and a removal of barriers to entry for young members.

Daniela said we can show international solidarity, and cultivate the relationship between UNISON and Justice For Colombia -- and more generally as trade unionists -- by way of carnivals, rallies, demonstrations in front of embassies and in public squares, festivals, and artistic endeavours.

Jon said Climate change and the COP27 summit concern young people; we must show (global) solidarity with developing nations, as we only have one planet.

Key motions of interest debated at the conference included:

Motion 3: Affordable Housing is a Human Right

Carried. Young people are more likely to rent, at exorbitant costs. Disabled people have extra expenses and often access requirements that are not met.

Motion 10: Raising the Age Limit for Young Members

Carried. The age limit for young members should be increased to 30 and under, in line with other unions, to prevent the “churn” of young activists ageing out.

Motion 8: UNISON Young Members Say No to Poverty Pay

Carried. Young members tend to make up some of the lowest paid workers due to part-time and precarious work. According to Scope’s 2019 “disability price tag” report, disabled people face extra costs of £583 a month; and 1 in 5 disabled people face extra costs of more than £1,000 a month. Pay gaps between disabled and non-disabled workers

Motion 11: Protected Facility Time For Young Members’ Officers

Carried. Young members make up 5% of UNISON membership, and only 2% of activists; young activists find that they are not allocated the time to perform their roles effectively, and request special time-off to fulfil the job role.

Motion 16: Supporting Transgender & Non-Binary Members

Carried. The National LGBT+ Committee encourage the NYMF to distribute information about: the Trans Ally Campaign, the Trans Model Policy (at Branch level), and factsheets about supporting Transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse young members.

The National Committee recommended that Composite A and Motion 16 go to NDC.

The NDMC put forward no motions to Conference, but I spoke in support of the following:

Motion 3 “AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT”, underscoring the fact that affordable housing is also a public health issue, and that during the Pandemic, disabled people had a higher incidence and higher mortality rate for Covid-19 infection, partly due to overcrowded and inaccessible housing.

Motion 8 “UNISON MEMBERS SAY NO TO POVERTY PAY”, highlighting the intersectionality of pay/wage gaps because of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, and dis/ability. Disabled people face extra costs averaging £583 a month; and 1 in 5 face extra costs of £1000 a month.

I addressed the Disabled Members’ Caucus Meeting. The caucus meeting was placed in the least-accessible location available, across the parking lot and downstairs from the main conference hall, after the Women’s meeting that overran. Could it be requested that for future conferences, the Disabled Members’ meetings be located nearer to Conference?

Latia Wilks

4. Caucus Reports

Deaf Caucus

Iain and Gillian have worked through the work programme to get our three motions that had been passed at our last conference in 2022, done, with a big thank-you to Deirdre Costigan, the national officer who had been there to support us.

The motions that had been passed from last year: Access All Areas: Additions services that are open to all; Accessible to mental health services; BSL Act: Next steps in protecting and preserving our language.

Access All Areas: We have now included the link from Sign Health, the deaf organisation supporting deaf people in need, on our UNISON website, also on social media so members can be signposted to the right service when needed.



The Deaf caucus network meeting

Accessible mental health services: We have identified and circulated the existing guideline which we can encourage union reps to signpost members in mental health need to them where appropriate. The link for Sign Health is now on our website so they can look into that for more information.

BSL Act: The Act was passed in 2022. The British Deaf Association (BDA) had set up a new group called BSL Alliance from various deaf organisations around the UK, to monitor the progress of the BSL Advisory Board set up by the UK Government. They meet and discuss the way

forward by advising the Government how to support the deaf community and our language BSL. We strongly encourage UNISON to monitor this to ensure that deaf people get good access to BSL nationally and that the UK Government listens to BSL Advisory Board's recommendations.

Iain has been on National Disabled Members Committee for 15 years, being elected to NDMC the 2018 conference in Chester. He was not that confident to join NDMC but thanks to the late Denise Lightbody which some of you might remember, she encouraged him to learn everything through her as she had some experience being on NDMC. Since then, Iain has learnt a lot and had been Deputy Co-Chair, then Co-Chair and has seen lots of changes of committees in the last 15 years, with three different National Officers, and Assistant National Officers. Iain would like to thank Denise for her great support, she was there for him until her passing away in 2020. He also thanks Gillian Jeffrey, the current National Committee for Deaf Caucus for her support. Recently Iain realised that he is the longest serving committee member, so he has decided it is time to step down from National Committee and allow a new fresh deaf member to become a committee member. Gillian is also stepping down.

We both thank every committee member during our years being on a committee team, and all national officers for their support. Of course, we give our huge thanks to the delegates who came to conferences and supported our motions, also to deaf members who came to various meetings to keep this going stronger and positive.

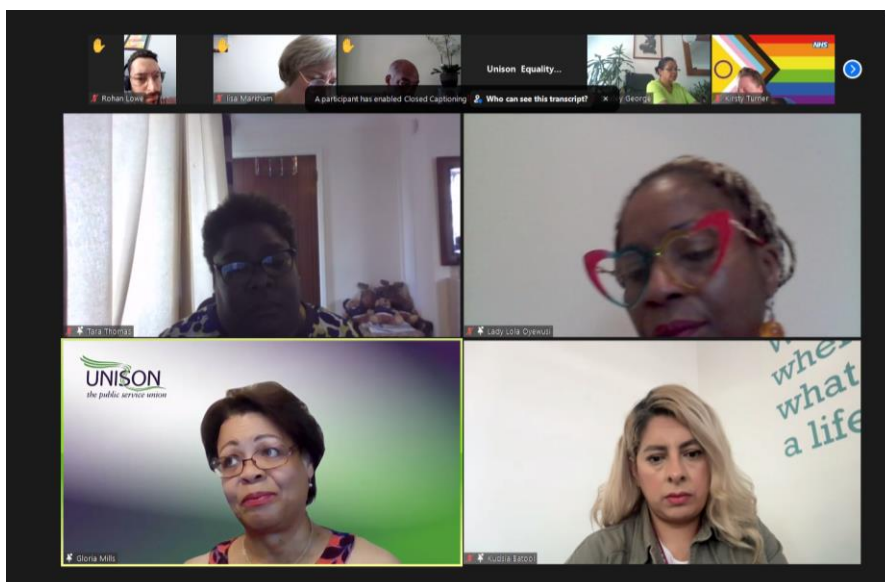
Iain Scott-Burdon and Gillian Jeffrey
Deaf Caucus Liaison Reps

Black caucus

The Disabled Black Members caucus with the support of national officers has been working on the motion passed last year, long covid and access to PIP for Black disabled workers. We have been amplifying the national campaign, circulating details of disability benefits consortiums and a letter has been sent to the minister.

The first Disabled Members Committee Meeting was held in Liverpool. Lola Oyewusi and Tara Thomas were elected as the Liaison Reps for the Black members caucus. We also selected Bertha Kanyangu and Abdul Rahman/ Jamal Pasha (job share) to represent NDMC on the National Black Members Committee.

This year the Black Disabled Members caucus have been working on the ethnicity pay gap and it's impact on Black Disabled Workers.



Speakers at our Pay Gap webinar organised as part of the Year of Black Workers

To support the Year of Black Workers the disabled Black caucus with the support of the national officers organised a webinar addressing the issues of Ethnicity pay gap on the 6th of September 2023, entitled Smashing the Disability and Race Pay Gaps. The meeting was chaired by Lola Oyewusi with panel speakers Kudsia Batool, TUC Head of Equalities and Strategy, Gloria Mills, UNISON National Secretary for Equalities and Tara Thomas, UNISON National Disabled Members Committee. The discussion focussed on the pay inequalities faced by Black disabled workers and what trade unions and branches can do to address this.

Disabled Black Members Network Meetings were held in June and August 2023. These meetings were designed for Black Members from various regions to come together for networking, organising, having a safe space to discuss issues that affect us. These meetings also made it inclusive for members to feed into to the disabled members conference agenda.

The meetings commenced with a warm welcome and introductions, allowing members to share their backgrounds and experiences. This created a sense of inclusivity and fostered a supportive meeting.

At the first meeting in June we agreed on the motions for NDMC 2023

- Motion 5: Progression for All – Black Members Can't be Left Behind
- Motion 9: Sickle Cell Disease Needs to Be Taken Seriously
- Motion 32: Inclusive Chairs Group That Represent Members That We Serve

The second networking meeting was to discuss amendments needed for the motions going through to this year conference. This gave members the opportunities to amend motions and make it relevant to Black disabled workers issues.

Thereby giving Black Members the opportunities to fully participate in motions debate relevant to the issues and concerns faced by Black Disabled Members within their organisation/workplace at conference.

Motion Amended were:

- Motion 1: Recognising Disabled members
- Motion 3: Let's Raise Awareness
- Motion 4: The Impact of Drugs and Alcohol Testing on Disabled Members
- Motion 16: Get the Vote Out, Get the Torie Out

The prioritised Motion for debate that the group agreed on were:

- Motion 5: Progression for All – Black Members Cant't be Left Behind
- Motion 9: Sickle Cell Disease Needs to Be Taken Seriously
- Motion 32: Inclusive Chairs Group That Represent Members That We Serve

We are appealing for Black Members to come forward to support and speak on the amendments.

We also discussed the motions to the National Black Members Conference 2024 which we agreed would be on Progression for Black Members in the workplace and in the union, and a motion on Black workers with neurodiversity and its impact on mental health. We also discussed incorporating Black History Month to the Year of Black Workers workshop during conference.

Black caucus is an important platform for discussing the challenges and concerns faced by Disabled Black Members within their organisation/ workplace. Supporting Black Disabled Members on how they can actively address these issues to implement the necessary adjustments and change needed for a balanced work life. The Disabled Black Members Caucus will continue to be committed to promoting inclusivity and equality for all.

Many thanks to the national officers and committee members who have been supporting us in fighting for a better tomorrow for Black disabled workers.

Lola Oyewusi and Tara Thomas
Black Caucus Liaison Reps

LGBT+ caucus

I would like to start this years report with welcoming our new members to the caucus, Donna Hollett who joined after being elected at our meeting at conference in 2022, and also Micheal Craig who joins as one of the representatives from the National LGBT+ Committee.

We have continued to support the national committee working with the two sub groups who worked on the work plan from last year's conference. Along with our work to build on the success of the Year of the disabled worker 2022.

The Caucus arranged for Emma Proctor, National LGBT+ Committee, to attend the Policy weekend in January to run a Trans Ally training session. There was a good discussion on the issues and how the committee can support the campaign. We also agreed to give our pronouns when we do introductions at the start of meetings.



Attendees at the LGBT+ caucus network meeting

The caucus were represented at the TUC disabled workers conference in Bournemouth this year, Carl was elected by the delegation to act as delegation lead. It was an interesting conference. Please read Carl's report.

We had a very well attended network day, where we had a good discussion and agreed our three motions. Our motions Mind the Pay Gap and Get the Vote Out to Get the Tories Out were accepted onto the agenda. Our Motion HIV has Changed and Our employers Need to Know This was ruled out of order due to the fact that the charter mentioned in the motion is yet to be published.

Please read the motion and we are hoping the LGBT+ Disabled network will consider this to go to the National LGBT+ Conference in Liverpool. We look forward to seeing you all in Edinburgh.

Carl Phillips
LGBT+ Caucus Liaison Rep

Women's Caucus

We have had two networking meetings in June and August where everyone was welcomed and introduced themselves. The women have been exceptionally brilliant in writing and amending motions that's going to our NDMC conference in October.



Attendees at the Women's caucus network meeting

We used this opportunity to say a BIG thank you to all our awesome women. We have been currently working on the following:

- Women's health strategy - this motion was passed at the last conference. The women's health strategy was released in October last year which includes having women's health hubs which will allow the NHS to listen to women's voices.
- Support for each other as disabled women.
- Encouraging more branches to do more work around disability leave, negotiating better disability workplace policies.
- Negotiating for free sanitary products for women, free prescription for women in England. Scotland, Wales & Ireland are already doing it.
- We have submitted three motions to NDMC conference and the following two motions have been ruled out - Menopause policy and Gender pension gap for women. However we have appealed both motions and hoping that the appeal would be successful
- Women caucus continues to grow from strength to strength with the support of our national officers.

Lola Oyewusi and Sonya Howard
Women's Caucus Liaison Reps

5. National Disabled Members Committee 2023

Eastern

Suzanne Williams
Jamal Pasha (from January)
Joanna Vanderhoof (until December 2022)

East Midlands

Paul Meadows

Greater London

Toby Morrison and Seamus Naghten (Job-share)
Jacqueline Sheehan

Northern

Stephen Powers
Sandie Robinson and Bertha Kanyangu (Job-share)

Northern Ireland

Amanda Sweetlove
Mandy Rutherford

North West

Graeme Ellis
Sharron Nicoll (until March)
Lisa Dempster (from March)

Scotland

Margaret Gilmurray
Tony Slaven (NDMC Co-Chair)

South Eastern

Abdul Rahman
Susan Parkinson

South West

Tara Thomas
Carole Hamilton

Cymru/Wales

Neelo Farr
Steve Gauci

West Midlands

Nicola Moran (NDMC Co-chair)
Lincoln Paul Davis (until December 2022)
Linda Woods (from January)

Yorkshire and Humberside

Kuldeep Bajwa

Denise Carr (from January)

Black members Caucus

Tansaim Hussain-Gul

Lola Oyewusi

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Plus Caucus

Carl Phillips

Donna Hollett (from January)

Deaf (native BSL users) Caucus

Gillian Jeffrey

Iain Scott-Burdon

National Black Members Committee

Pam Sian (until March)

Manjula Kumari (until March)

Bev Miller (from March)

Mitsy Harmon-Russell and Annette Heslop (Job-share from March)

National LGBT+ Committee

Bev Miller (until January)

Louise Ashworth

Michael Craig (from January)

National Women's Committee

Sonya Howard

Elizabeth Cameron (until March)

Maggie Griffin (from March)

NEC

Katrina Murray

Angela Hamilton

Sian Stockham (until June)

Denise Thomas (from August)

TUC Disabled Workers Committee representative (ex-officio)

Sian Stockham (from June)



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