



# **NATIONAL YOUNG MEMBERS FORUM**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **from the Chair of the National Young Members Forum**

Dear friends,

Thank you for joining our third young members conference. This year has been another historical one for young members and I remain inspired by the dedication and commitment of young members from across our union.

During National Delegate Conference in June young members introduced a rule change increasing the age of a young member from 26 to 30. There were many reasons for doing this and I was glad to see it supported by self-organised groups, branches and the NEC. This campaign showed that the voices of young members matter, and it is important to continue to make our voice heard across all our union structures.

Whilst we ensure that young members are represented at our self-organised group and national conferences, we have also sent young members as delegates to Labour Party Conference and TUC Congress, as well as sending a delegation to TUC Young Workers Conference. In some areas we have managed to go further, sending a delegate to PSI Congress in Geneva as well as the East Midlands Young Members Forum sending two delegates to Cuba.

As we continue to see industrial action taking place across our trade union movement, I send full solidarity to all workers participating in industrial action. At the time of writing includes support staff at Ashfield Academy in Leicester and Wirral Clinical Support workers within UNISON. We all stand with you.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the union staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make this conference possible, the National Young Members Forum for coming up with so many ideas for this conference and to every young member attending today, this conference wouldn't be possible without you.

*Jess McGuire*

**Chair**

**National Young Members Forum**



## **THE NATIONAL YOUNG MEMBERS FORUM**

The National Young Members Forum (NYMF) is UNISON's national committee representing young members. Every region nominates two delegates to the Forum, and the two NEC representatives for young members also sit on the Forum. It meets formally four times a year, with occasional informal briefings in between these quarterly in-person meetings.

The NYMF held a combination of in-person, hybrid and online meetings in 2023. We held our AGM in February in Glasgow welcoming many new regional delegates, electing new officers and planning the year ahead for young workers in UNISON.

We also agreed our workplan for the year. This was based on the priorities agreed at Young Members Conference 2022, including mental health, the recruitment and development of young activists, campaigning for a change in the definition of a young member in UNISON. Our workplan also included work with other parts of the union on issues important to young workers such as the climate, LGBT+ equality, sexual harassment, international matters and of course the cost of living crisis.

We held meetings through the year in UNISON Centre and online, agreeing motions for conferences and taking forward our workplan, including planning and agreeing conference arrangements and plans for TUC Young Workers Month in November.

## Membership of the National Young Members Forum October 2023

<b>NEC</b>	Cameron Smith
	Micaela Tracey-Ramos
<b>Cymru/Wales</b>	Ryan Hopkins
	Frances Holms
<b>East Midlands</b>	Jess McGuire (Chair)
	Megan Wilson-Ibbotson
<b>Eastern</b>	Amber MacDonald
	Charlotte Pybus
<b>Greater London</b>	Frances Osborne
	Kieran Patterson
<b>North West</b>	Fenn Horan
	Owen Michael
<b>Northern</b>	Caitlin Hurley
	Alistair Graham
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	Lorna McLarnon
	Jason Magee
<b>Scotland</b>	Rosie Cassidy
	Cameron Thompson/Keiran Whalen (jobshare)
<b>South East</b>	Lizzie Bailey
	Ruben Brett
<b>South West</b>	Oscar Illingworth/Vicky Redwood (jobshare)
	Zuzana Gabuzdova/Shannon Best (jobshare)
<b>West Midlands</b>	Ryan Fox
	Charlotte Clifton
<b>Yorkshire and Humberside</b>	vacant
	vacant



## **RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISING**

Recruitment of young workers continues to be a central focus of the National Young Members Forum, in addition to building activity among young workers in UNISON and encouraging more young members to take part at a branch, regional and national level.

In 2023, following motions to 2022 young members conference, we focused on the issue of the age range for young members in UNISON. We started by considering the support we would have to build in UNISON for a rule change to be passed, and agreeing a campaign strategy to get this rule change passed by a two-thirds majority at National Delegate Conference.

In April 2023 we launched our consultation of Regional Young Members Forums alongside our survey of UNISON members. We asked all RYMFs to feed back on two questions: whether the age limit for young members in UNISON was the right one, and if not, what should it be. We noted that the 2022 Young Members Conference had called for the age limit to be redefined as 'all those aged 30 and under'. Every Regional Young Members Forum which responded agreed that the age limit should be raised, and that 30 seemed the appropriate age limit.

At the same time, we launched a survey open to all UNISON young members (young and old) asking for their views on the age range. This showed that there was strong support in UNISON for the age limit to be changed, with 64% of members agreeing that the age range should be changed, and 75% of members agreeing that 30 was the right age limit. We also briefed the National Executive Council's Development and Organisation Committee on the decisions passed at Young Members Conference including the call for a rule change, which was positively received by NEC members.

In the run-up to conference, we produced a model motion for branches and regions, asked branches, regions and Self-Organised Groups to prioritise our rule change for debate, and prepared a factsheet called 'Time for 30' explaining why UNISON's young members were asking delegates to support this change. As a result our rule change was prioritised to be the first rule change debated during the Rules debate at conference.

At National Delegate Conference, we held a fringe meeting on Organising Young Members, at which several members of the NYMF spoke alongside the TUC's officer responsible for young workers. As well as explaining why we were calling for a rule change, and circulating our factsheet, we also promoted our earlier 2020 report 'Getting Active in UNISON' and its recommendations to branches seeking to recruit and organise more young workers.

Rule Change D: Young Members Seat was passed by an overwhelming majority. Following this, we publicised the rule change widely by email and on social media, including an interview with young activists which was published in UNISON's U Magazine, in which two young members discussed some of the challenges and opportunities in getting young workers to become more active in UNISON.

Our email newsletter, sent quarterly to all young members in UNISON continues to receive strong feedback and has an excellent 'open rate'. Through this we have promoted different issues and campaigns important to UNISON's young members, and we have shared other UNISON campaigns – such as UNISON's Year of Black Workers and the many industrial action ballots taking place across the union.

In addition to promoting our report called 'Getting Active in UNISON', we have also produced a new factsheet on 'Simple steps

to recruit and organise more young members in UNISON', which summarise some of the key recommendations from our earlier report.

In July we brought together the staff members who work with Regional Young Members' Forums for a strategy day aimed at building engagement by young workers across the union following the rule change. Among the topics discussed were the importance of UNISON's education and training offer in building engagement with young members, organising young members around equality issues, including a discussion around the importance of UNISON's Year of Black Workers and the LGBT+ young members network, and the key considerations for building a young members organisational strategy, which we hope to launch next year.

## **BARGAINING AND EQUALITIES**

Equality issues continue to be a priority area of work for the National Young Members Forum, reflected by the motions passed at the 2022 Young Members Conference on organising young LGBT+ members, supporting Trans Equality and UNISON's year of Black workers, and challenging misogyny and harassment of all kinds.

Throughout 2023 we have promoted and publicised activities around UNISON's Year of Black workers, and have been working with the National Black members committee to identify barriers for young Black members in becoming more active in UNISON. Next year we hope to launch a national young Black members network to bring together young Black members in UNISON and to encourage and support active Black members to play a larger role in the union's activity.

The LGBT+ Young Members Network continues to go from strength to strength and we continue to publicise this and support its activity. Formed in 2022 as a piece of joint working between the National LGBT+ committee and the National Young Members Forum, the network was created to be an informal but lively organising group for young LGBT+ members. So far the LGBT+ young members network has agreed the themes and topics for motions from the National LGBT+ Committee to Young Members Conference, and has an active WhatsApp group. This year the LGBT+ network launched its mentoring scheme in which a number of young LGBT+ members will be mentored by trained and experienced members of the National LGBT+ Committee.

Next year we hope to replicate this form of informal networking with UNISON's National Black Members Committee and National

Women's Committee, as a way of building engagement between UNISON's young members and our self-organised groups.

Ryan Hopkins and Jess McGuire sit on the Equality Liaison Committee as representatives from the NYMF. (Ryan replaced Terri Pearson who stood down from the Forum in June 2023.) The Equality Liaison Committee brings together the NEC representatives with representatives from the National Self-Organised Group Committees and National Young Members Forum and gives young members and SOG reps the opportunity to update the NEC directly on their issues and campaigns, raise any concerns, and hear directly from the NEC on their work and priorities.

The NYMF continues to promote our 'Respect your youth!' Young Workers Charter as a bargaining and campaigning tool, highlighting the bargaining and workplace priorities most important to young members and encouraging employers to take action on the key concerns of younger workers: pay, fair contracts, equality at work, decent apprenticeships and development and progression activities.

We have continued to work with the service groups to improve recruitment and organisation of young members – this year we organised a well-attended fringe at Local Government Service Group Conference as well as sessions at the Energy Branch Seminar and the WET and Energy Equalities seminar. The Local Government Fringe provoked lively and positive discussion about challenges and opportunities in recruiting and organising young members in UNISON, and this has been followed up in Local Government with an e-newsletter for branches focusing on young workers issues in order to mark TUC Young Workers Month. We have also represented young workers issues and concerns as part of the Local Government Equality Liaison Group.

## **CAMPAIGNING AND INFLUENCING**

Mental health continues to be one of the key campaigning areas for UNISON's National Young Members Forum in 2023, following our survey of young members. We have widely publicised our survey report, highlighting the experiences of young workers, and were awarded funds from UNISON's Campaign Fund to develop this campaign. We hope to launch our campaign at Young Members Conference 2023, building towards our externally-focused campaign on the Right to Disconnect.

The Cost of Living Crisis has also been a key area for young members. We have continued to publicise and promote UNISON's campaigning work on the Cost of Living crisis to young members by email and social media. We know that young people are one of the groups most seriously affected by the cost of living crisis, and so we strongly promoted the Equality Survey to young members, which included a section on the impact of the cost of living crisis and how this is affecting UNISON members. Over 600 young members responded and we will use this information as the basis of a report on the cost of living crisis and its impact on young workers in public services.

We have also supported UNISON's work on green issues and climate, promoting UNISON's climate campaigning and our Green Network to young members, and encouraging young members to sign up as Green reps in their workplaces.

### **Labour Link**

Liam Castles attended UNISON Labour Link Forum on behalf of the NYMF. As part of his report on the Labour Link Forum he noted:

*As the representative of the National Young Members Forum, I moved Motion 10: 'Bereavement Leave.' When moving the motion I highlighted the discriminatory impacts that the current policy arrangements have on non-nuclear families and carers, the imbalance of power that employees face against bosses when grieving, and the mental health effects experienced by individuals as a result. I was followed by two brilliant orators from UNISON's young members structures, Ryan Hopkins and Jess McGuire who brilliantly made the case for improving the statutory right to bereavement leave. The motion was passed unanimously. Well done NYMF!*

*Overall, the Forum was a great experience. The mood reflected the optimism that the Labour party would form the next government and implement many of the solutions to the issues that UNISON had been campaigning on for years. I enjoyed being an active participant in the debate and came away from the event with a much greater understanding of the dynamic between the Labour party and UNISON. If you can make it next year, I would greatly encourage you to attend!*

## **Trades Union Congress**

UNISON's young members continue to be fully involved in the Trades Union Congress (TUC) Young Workers Forum, with our current delegates being Ruben Brett and Megan Wilson-Ibbotson. Ruben Brett also joined UNISON's delegation to the 2023 TUC Congress.

The 2023 Young Workers Conference took place in April and UNISON's motions on Young Workers Say No to Poverty Pay! and Sexual Harassment is Never OK were supported by conference.

UNISON's motion Young Workers Say No to Poverty Pay! was voted by delegates to the TUC Young Workers Conference to be their motion to TUC Congress, where it was moved by UNISON's Ruben Brett and carried unanimously.

<b>UNISON Delegates to TUC Young Workers Conference 2023</b>
Jasper Bailey
Natasha Bednall
Ruben Brett (also to TUC Young Workers Forum)
Ryan Hopkins
Jess McGuire
Tshenolo Rosinah Milton
Sam Fury
Sarah Walsh
Megan Wilson-Ibbotson (also to TUC Young Workers Forum)



## **UNISON CONFERENCES**

The 2022 Young Members Conference from 4-6 December 2022 in Bournemouth was a great success, with excellent feedback – despite the travel setbacks experienced by many delegates.

In 2022 we were delighted that conference could include a full programme of workshops and speakers, as in 2021 activities outside of the conference hall had to be restricted due to Covid health and safety considerations. In 2022 also for the first time, young members elected delegates to represent the National Young Members Forum at UNISON's Self-Organised Group and Service Group conferences, as well UNISON delegates to the TUC Young Workers Conference.

Speakers at the 2022 Young Members Conference included Kerry Baigent from the South West Region, who welcomed conference to the Region, as well as Assistant General Secretary Jon Richards, Vice-President Amerit Rait, and Colombian trade unionist Daniela Vega Sotelo, a member of the peasant farmer's union FENSUAGRO. The programme of workshops and fringes included sessions on being a good trans ally, misogyny and sexual harassment, UNISON's national organising and recruitment strategy, UNISON's campaign fund, the Year of Black workers, pensions, climate, and what to do in UNISON after you've aged out of young membership.

### **National Delegate Conference**

Ryan Hopkins represented the NYMF at the UNISON's National Delegate Conference (NDC) in June 2023. The NYMF submitted a motion and a rule change to NDC, and our motion *Harassment: it's not part of the job* was debated and carried by conference following a moving debate in which delegates spoke passionately about their

experiences of harassment at work. Our rule change *D: Young Members Seat* was overwhelmingly supported after a very positive debate, as described above.

We also held a well-attended and lively young members meeting at National Delegate Conference, and a successful and fun Young Members Conference social on the Tuesday evening. In order to make young delegates feel more confident at conference, we provided a full briefing on conference to all young delegates, and also set up a WhatsApp group open to all young delegates to conference. This got excellent feedback and we will repeat this in future.

### **Other UNISON Conferences**

Owen Michael attended the 2022 UNISON LGBT+ Conference in Edinburgh as the delegate representing the National Young Members Forum. He spoke to move the NYMF's motion *Supporting Young Trans Workers in UNISON* and our amendment on motion 6, *Recruiting and Organising Young LGBT+ Members*.

In his report he noted:

*Throughout the Conference there were several fringes I attended regarding organising young LGBT+ members and the network all of which I thought were productive and ideas mentioned as to what more could be done to promote young members in general and young LGBT+ members in particular taking part in the organisational part of the union, including some respectful suggestions from no longer young members on why they felt they hadn't when they were young.*

*There were only two particularly contentious debates - one was largely on whether Nalgay, our predecessor, had been the world's first union LGBT+ section. Whilst arguments were made concerning the inclusively (whilst using now outdated language) of the original invitation the majority voted not to refer to it as such, the argument of those opposed being that it had nonetheless been set up as "lesbian and gay" and it had*

*taken work later on to have an officially LGBT+ section that should not be erased.*

*The other was over a series of amendments to motions to insert references to retired members. The National Committee felt that whilst a number were sensible in some cases they did not fit the context particularly where other SOGs and young members were not mentioned and Conference voted according to their recommendation.*

*On Sunday I spoke in favour of both the motion on organising young LGBT+ workers, which our amendments had been composited with, and ours on supporting young trans workers, both of which passed uncontested.*

*We also heard a speech from the President on the union and her own personal support for LGBT+ rights and a panel discussion including the General Secretary on why trans rights is a UNISON issue despite the backlash both the union and the panelists personally (whether as trans people or allies) had had for this.*

*We also received word during the day's session of the Club Q shooting in Colorado and paused briefly out of respect for the dead.*

*Both discussion in the Labour Link caucus and an emergency motion passed also dealt with dissatisfaction over the Labour Party's failure to take action on transphobia, regarding Rosie Duffield in particular.*

*Overall it was a very positive Conference.*

Vipul Bechar and Lily Stockdale were the NYMF representatives at the 2023 Black Members Conference also held in Edinburgh. They moved our motions *Young Black workers and mental health at work* and *Young Black workers and the cost of living crisis*, which were both carried.

They reported:

*Speakers across the weekend included Conference Chair Kebba Manneh, UNISON General Secretary Christina McAnea, UNISON President Andrea Egan and Professor Gus John. The guest speakers were excellent and received their due applause.*

*Conference was able to debate all of the motions on the agenda, all were passed including; the two motions submitted by NYMF on: the Cost of living crisis, and the motion on Young Black members and mental health.*

*There was some lively debate between the conference and the Standing Orders committee - around motions that were ruled out of order. Some of these motions were ruled out of order due to the nature that they were worded and in terms of the impact on other SOGs. There were a number of motions which referenced working with the NYMF (worded as the NBMC 'will work with' or collaborate with NYMF). As a result, a number of commitments were passed at conference that implicated NYMF to commit to work. Although it is likely none of this work would be seen as controversial in of itself by NYMF.*

*Conference was well attended at the start, although attendance issues meant conference did not reach quorum and this caused a delay on the final day of conference. In addition, there were some issues with time management throughout the conference which led to many motions not being able to be discussed as thoroughly as some members would have hoped.*

Sarah Walsh and Terri Pearson were the NYMF delegates to National Women's Conference, held in Bournemouth in February 2023. They moved our motions *Young women and the cost of living crisis* and *Work-life balance, mental health and the Right to Disconnect* which were both passed by conference.

Liam Castles and Eleesha Kyriazis were the NYMF delegates to Local Government Conference, in Liverpool in June 2023, where sadly our motion *Harassment: it's not part of the job* was not reached on the agenda. The composite was supported, and prompted a lively debate. Liam and Eleesha also participated in the fringe we organised at Local Government, Organising and Recruiting Young Workers, along with Sean Neighbour from North West Region. The session was chaired by Inez Kirk from the Local Government Service Group Executive and prompted a positive and lively discussion about the challenges and opportunities for working with young members within the Local Government Service Group.

In Liam's report on this conference he wrote:

*As my first time at local government conference, I was unsure what to expect, though I can now wholeheartedly say that it was a brilliant experience.*

*I attended as a delegate from the National Young members forum alongside Eleesha and tried to immerse myself as thoroughly as possible in the event.*

*This meant attending every fringe, being at every debate on the conference floor, and attempting to speak (though not succeeding as I was cut of by a point of order!). This may seem very overwhelming from an outside perspective, however, I felt supported in every step of the way by my fellow young members and our national lead, Josephine.*

*I would recommend for any young member to attend conference. In addition to the support, it's a unique opportunity to learn about UNISON's politics, finance, organising and equalities activities; furthermore, it's a great place to network and meet fellow activists from across the union whose knowledge is unmatched.*

*Overall, Local Government Conference was a great introduction to the internal workings of the union, and a great way to ease into the bigger event of National Delegate Conference that was held immediately afterwards.*

And Eleesha added:

*I supported on a motion entitled 'The Future of Local Government', and I spoke about how the repeated cuts to our sector over the last decade have changed public perception regarding the stability of working within a local authority due to the vast amount of services provided being reduced or outright cut from their offering, as well as changes to pensions and pay which make workers worse off. I put several questions to the floor, asking them to think about what local government might function as in twenty years time if we continue down the same path of cuts, and whether or not there will be a public sector as we currently know it. I also spoke about how difficult it is for young workers to begin and sustain a career in local government where there are very limited opportunities to do so beyond entry level work at the moment.*

*On the Sunday I participated on the panel for the fringe event focused on Young Members within Local Government. I spoke about how my activism has only been possible through the nurturing I have received by my branch and the Eastern Region's YM forum, and made the point that if other branches wish to develop their YMs they need to provide adequate support. This was a common theme shared by other YM on the panel.*

Frances Holms represented the NYMF at the Water, Environment and Transport conference, also held in Liverpool in June. In her report she noted:

*UNISON's annual Water, Environment and Transport (WET) conference met earlier this month (12th June 2023) in Liverpool. The conference covered a range of themes which primarily centred on protecting the working and private lives of WET workers.*

*It covered motions seeking to protect workers' safety and pay, specifically motion 6 ('Environment Agency Workers Deserve A Decent Pay Rise in Line with Inflation'), improve the experiences of different members including black members, disabled members and LGBT+ members in their workplaces and their right to have a good work/life balance, motion 5 ('Work-life balance, mental health and the Right to Disconnect') and motion 13 ('Mental Health Awareness Training') calling for action to improve work/life balance and mental health training for WET workers.*

*However, aside from these topics, the conference also covered more general issues relating to the renationalisation agenda, with motion 11 calling the conference to support the renationalisation of water and a last minute addition, motion 14, calling for the renationalisation of all public transport. Overall, this conference covered a range of important issues for WET workers; there being a range of motions relevant to the different work lives of UNISON's young members with those relating to work/life balance (motion 5), inflation (motion 6) and mental health (motion 13) being the most obvious.*

*As a young person these issues often affect my life so it was amazing to hear all the speaker talk about and discuss these issues so passionately. The conference was a success with a fantastic turnout and all motions as shown at the conference being successfully carried as well.*

Owen Michael attended Disabled Members Conference which was held in Edinburgh in October 2022.

We would like to thank all those delegates who represented the National Young Members Forum at UNISON conferences.

<b>National Young Members Forum delegates to UNISON conferences 2022-23</b>	
LGBT+ Conference 2022	Owen Michael
Black Members Conference 2023	Vipul Bechar
	Lily Stockdale
Women's Conference 2023	Terri Pearson
	Sarah Walsh
Local Government Conference 2023	Eleesha Kyriazis
	Liams Castles
Water, Environment and Transport Conference 2023	Frances Holms
National Delegate Conference 2023	Ryan Hopkins
Labour Link Forum 2023	Liam Castles
Disabled Members Conference 2023	Owen Michael

## **INTERNATIONAL**

We invited an international speaker, Colombian trade unionist Daniela Vega Sotelo, to speak at 2022 Young Members Conference. A representative of the peasant farmer's union FENSUAGRO, Daniela's speech was warmly received by delegates and the NYMF agreed that there should be a standing invitation for an international speaker at all future Young Members Conferences.

Through the year we have encouraged Regional Young Member Forums to promote UNISON's international activity, in particular our engagement with Cuba Solidarity, and through social media have promoted and publicised blogs by UNISON young members writing about their experiences as part of delegations to Cuba.

UNISON's Head of International Nick Crook gave a briefing to the NYMF on UNISON's International work. There will be an International fringe at the 2023 Young Members Conference focusing on UNISON's work in Latin America and the Caribbean, and we are hoping to hear from a young trade unionist from the Turkish trade union KESK about the repression of trade union activity in Turkey.

Ryan Hopkins was a UNISON delegate to the European Public Service Unions (EPSU) youth network meeting held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October 2023.

Lizzie Bailey joined the UNISON delegation to the Public Services International (PSI) Congress in Geneva, Switzerland, held in October 2023.

She reported:

*I had the opportunity to attend the Public Services International (PSI) Congress as the NYMF representative as part of the UNISON delegation. The PSI Congress is a global union federation representing 30 million*



*workers from 700 unions in 156 countries, it took place between 14-18th October in Geneva.*

*The UNISON delegation was very well organised and the staff and other delegates were so welcoming and supportive - I felt comfortable at all times. The week started with an opening ceremony, with Congress business commencing the following day. The Programme of Action (PoA), panel discussions and speeches really highlighted how deep solidarity runs, and how interconnected our struggles are.*

*Across the five days there were contributions from numerous unions, speakers, and organisations from all over the world. There was lots of insight and ideas for different methods of union organising; I particularly liked the contributions from Mercy Nabwire from KMPDU, where they started unionising across the employment barrier, reaching out to students, under-employed and unemployed health workers. Empowering their union to negotiate for better working conditions and pay for their members, and sharing their experience with unions from across the world.*

*I also had the opportunity to speak on an amendment to the PoA, on LGBT+ representation within PSI. It was a terrifying but exciting experience, as I was talking to representatives from across the world and my speech was being translated into 16 other languages! I stood with many other LGBT+ trade unionists and allies to strengthen LGBT+ rights within PSI for generations to come. As LGBT+ rights across the world have dramatic variations, it was both a humbling and inspiring moment when the amendment passed. The struggle for basic human rights is a struggle that trade unions across the world share, Anita Gurumurthy from IT for Change summarised this brilliantly when she said "Rights are not given. They are taken. And we must fight for them".*

*It was so exciting to have the opportunity to learn and share experiences with so many trade unionists from around the world. PSI produced a factbook that outlines some of the core issues that trade unions are facing today which is helpful for understanding the global situation.*

*The Congress gave me a lot to think about and so much to learn, I would recommend that anyone passionate about international collaboration*

*explore UNISONs international work, the PSI PoA, and where possible getting involved further with the work of trade unions internationally.*

## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

The Regional Young Members Forums continue to be a key site for young members to meet, network, organise and campaign.

Regional Young Member Forums are open to all young members interested in getting involved in their local areas – you don't have to be delegated by your branch to go along – and organise local campaigns and projects.

Every Regional Forum can elect an officer group and nominates two young members to represent the Region on the National Young Members Forum. If you are interested in getting more involved in your regional forum, contact your Regional Young Members Forum; details are available here:

### **Cymru/Wales**

#### **Eastern**

#### **East Midlands**

The East Midlands Young Members Forum have had an exciting year.

At last year's NYMF Annual Conference, the East Midlands Forum motion on changing the age limit was passed and chosen as one of two motions to be forwarded to National Delegates Conference. In June 2023 NDC passed the motion and the resulting rule change has helped bring a new energy to the forum both through returning 'young members' now young enough again, but also through the knowledge that members have the power to make lasting change within their union.

At the AGM in January the Forum decided that it want to ensure that meetings and organising activity went hand in hand. At the Forum's spring and summer meetings, members also took part in organising activity as part of the Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign as well as supporting events like Pride.

In between meetings a vibrant WhatsApp group means that members are in regular contact supporting each other in branch activity as well as regional activity outside the forum. Several of the Forum members have positions on

wider regional committees, have undertaken training to be workplace reps and become branch officers.

In May two of the Forum members travelled to Cuba for the May Day celebrations for what they have described as a life changing experience and they have been sharing their travel stories with UNISON members since their return.

In September the Forum held what has become an annual training weekend, with guest speakers and training sessions on organising to win and planning for the Forum's work stream next year. They have also submitted motions to NYMC, one of which was successful and colleagues look forward to moving it at conference. The Forum was delighted to be able to submit a full delegation and even have names on a reserve list, which shows how much improved engagement with the forum has become and the interest in being part of the Forum both regionally and nationally.

## **Greater London**

This year has seen a big uptick in activity in for the Greater London Regional Young Members Forum. In July we held our first in person AGM since the pandemic that was very well attended. As a result, we now have a full and active Regional Young Members Committee, which is not something we've always had in the past.

The recent increase in the age limit for UNISON's Young Members structures has been beneficial to getting lots of young members involved who otherwise wouldn't have engaged with union. We're looking forward to getting to work on tackling our campaigning priorities in the year ahead.

## **North West**

2023 has once again been a busy year for young members of UNISON active in the North West. In March, we had attendees at the annual Skills for Strength convention who learnt from the weekend and ran their own workshop on organising young members. Additionally, the week after we had our annual political education weekend, where we learnt about the economics behind trade unionism and had speakers from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

In April and May, we sent over two delegates as part of the May Day Brigade to Cuba, learning about how the country works and how to fight the US blockade.

And recently we have just had our AGM, where Nigel Flanagan gave a talk on his new book about British trade unionism, and we once again elected a full committee to run our forum for the upcoming year.

Additionally we have continued to train up new reps, have a presence at picket lines across the region, have delegates at TUC Young Members conference and UNISON NDC, as well as prepare a full delegation of 10 for our young members conference for this year.

## **Northern**

It's been a good year for the Northern Region Young Members Network. Young Members have been participating in the regional work to support the organisation and activism of Young Members across the region.

Activities have included the launch of a newsletter, a development day with trans ally and motion writing training, a delegation to the Durham Miners' Gala, and monthly meetings with young activists.

Future plans include strategic targeting and mapping of young members in schools, a celebration of Young Workers Month on social media, and our annual social event.

## **Northern Ireland**

## **Scotland**

Scottish Young Members (SYM) held their Annual General Meeting in March 2023. The committee invited guest a speaker from Living Rent. Danny Pilkington spoke on the current crisis happening in the housing and rent areas. SYM's were told how they can get involved and support campaigns at local and national levels. The crisis in housing directly impacts young workers across Scotland. SYM were told the importance of affordable housing, public ownership, and challenging rogue landlords. Young Members Committee agreed to supporting Living Rent campaigns and share any digital/ social media materials.

Twelve Young Members were elected to Committee roles. Vice Chair Cameron Thompson was elected as Branch Secretary for Western Isles and has committed to work closely and support the committee.

March 2023 also saw the residential training weekend. Current and new young members from across Scotland took part in activities such as Workplace Mapping, Power in the workplace, Recruitment – Anger Hope Action, Strategic campaigning, Digital campaigning, Trade Union history and Understanding Equality and Diversity. The training weekend was also attended by the Scottish Secretary and Regional Organiser for Education.

At Scottish Council Scottish Young Members received the Chris Bartter Award for creative use of communications. This was awarded due to the high engagement Scottish Young Members have had on digital platforms. SYM have committed to creating digital content, having online engagement, and supporting campaigns digitally for the future. SYM spoke at Scottish Council to highlight a motion for changing the age of UNISON Young Members and asked Branches to support this motion.

SYM have supported and engaged with Scottish Black Members Committee (SBMC) as 2023 hosted Year of the Black Worker. SYM invited Kay McKerrill SCMC secretary to speak at their June committee meeting. SYM were presented with some harsh figures that highlighted the lack of black activists in the Scottish region and the number of race discrimination cases. SYM have committed to engage with SBMC going forward to improve their work place and promote understanding and equality across Scotland.

In addition SYM welcomed Tony Slaven from Scottish Disabled members to their September committee meeting. Tony highlighted the many challenges faced by disabled members on a daily basis and how many workplace policies can inadvertently be discriminatory. SYM better understood hidden disabilities and how to support members in their workplaces and branches.

SYM have supported sectors and branches who have faced industrial action across Scotland. Higher Education and Local Government members have had support online and on picket lines across Scotland from Scottish Young Members.

## **South East**

This year has seen the largest number of delegates elected to the South East Young Members' Forum in several years. Since the AGM in February, we have held two Forum meetings and have one more planned before the next AGM later in the year.

One of our main aims this year was to increase participation from young members. The Forum decided to have a different focus at each Forum meeting to try and encourage new young members to get involved. We planned a trans ally workshop as part of the first meeting which was a success, with new young members attending and participating.

The Forum have also been planning a training weekend around Organising and Campaigning however this had to be put on hold due to an accommodation review in the region. Instead, we are now planning a training day at UNISON Centre in February 2024 and working towards maxisiming attendance at our AGM.

The South East are sending a full delegation of members to the National Young Members' Conference this year, several of whom are Forum members. Two of our Forum members are attending on behalf of the National Young Members' Forum and one is on the standing orders committee.

Next year, the Forum will be building on the work we have done this year to increase young members involvement in the union, equipping them with practical skills to campaign and organise.

## **South West**

## **West Midlands**

In the West Midlands we have had a good year of regrowth in the forum, and this has seen more Young Members attending the meetings. We are very pleased to be sending 10 delegates to the National Young Members Conference this year.

We are in the planning stages of setting up recruitment stalls across the region in 2024 targeted at Young Members, also we have had some successful at being invited to induction days for new starters.

Next year we are working on holding a Young Members Weekend to cover topics for campaigning and organising which will hopefully see the group drawing up a workplan that can be taken forward.

## **Yorkshire and Humberside**

Yorkshire and Humberside are in the process of rebuilding their Regional Young

Members Forum after Covid. They held a strategy day in June 2023 bringing together young members to discuss organising and policy issues, and will be holding their first full Regional Young Members Forum meeting in November.



## CONFERENCE 2022 MOTIONS

The following motions were passed at Young Members Conference 2022, and the actions taken on each are listed below.

<b>M1 Keeping Young Workers Safe at Work</b>
We have promoted UNISON's training for Health and Safety officers and encouraged young UNISON members to stand for this role in branches. In addition, we have moved various motions on harassment at work at National Delegate Conference, Local Government Conference and TUC Young Workers Conference highlighting the dangers of lone working and the need for safe working environments for lone workers.
<b>M2 Young Black members - step in and step up</b>
We publicised the young Black members video and the young Black member of the year award to all young members. As part of the briefing for staff working with young members, we held a session on activity and membership of young Black workers and discussed strategies to increase this. We are also continuing to work towards setting up a young Black members network. There will be a session at Young Members Conference on the year of Black workers.
<b>M3 Affordable Housing is a Human Right</b>
We have highlighted UNISON's housing manifesto to young workers within UNISON, and young delegates at UNISON's Labour Link Forum were able to emphasise in that conference the importance of secure affordable housing to young workers.
<b>M4 Uncomfortable yet? Sexual harassment is never OK</b>
Our motion to National Delegate Conference addressed the issue of harassment and we submitted similar motions to Local Government and TUC Young Workers Conference. We have included a session on misogyny as part of the programme of workshops at the 2023 Young Workers Conference.
<b>M5 Regions to send young members to Cuba and affiliate their branches to Cuba Solidarity</b>
Several regions included young members in May Day delegations to Cuba. There will be an international fringe at Young Members Conference 2023 on UNISON's international work in the Caribbean and Latin America, including solidarity with Cuba.
<b>M7 Organising and recruiting young Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender plus members</b>

The NYMF has continued to work closely with the LGBT+ young members network and to publicise this to young members in UNISON. This year the network launched its mentoring scheme for young LGBT+ mentors which has had a good uptake.

**M8 UNISON young members say no to poverty pay!**

UNISON's motion to the TUC Young Workers Conference 2023 was on poverty pay, and this was voted to be the TUC Young Workers Forum's motion to TUC Congress 2023. As part of the equality survey we asked members about the cost of living crisis and publicised this survey to young members; a report on young members and the cost of living will follow. We have continued to promote UNISON's pay campaigns and industrial action to young members and to encourage them to take part in campaigns in their branches and service groups.

**M10 Raising the Age Limit for Young Members**

The NYMF moved a rule change at National Delegate Conference 2023 proposing raising the age limit for young members from 26 to 30. This was carried and UNISON's rulebook has been updated accordingly. In preparation for this rule change, we surveyed UNISON members and Regional Young Member Forums on this change and held a fringe at National Delegate Conference to explain why we were calling for this change. We have publicised the rule change to members and emphasised the organising opportunity this offers.

**M11 Protected Facility Time for Young Members' Officers**

We are planning a survey of young members asking about their engagement with branch and regional activity, including a question on facility time. We have worked with several Service Groups including Local Government, Community, Energy and WET to identify barriers to young members engagement such as insufficient facility time, and to encourage them to address this where possible.

**M13 Adapting to new ways of working after the Covid-19 pandemic**

As part of the equality survey we asked members about flexible working and publicised this survey to young members; analysis of the responses will follow. We continue to campaign for the Right to Disconnect both as a bargaining demand within employers and as a political demand for stronger legislation safeguarding work-life balance.

**M14 Engagement & Retention of active Young Members Motion**

We are planning a survey of young members asking about their engagement with branch and regional activity, including good and bad practice. We have continued to promote our report 'Getting Active in UNISON' and have

developed a new factsheet on organising young workers based on the recommendations of this report. LAOS have briefed regional staff working with young members about the resources available for workshops and training sessions which can be delivered in regions and branches.

**M15 Bereavement Leave**

Our motion to UNISON's Labour Link Forum called for the Labour party to commit to a stronger right to bereavement leave and this was passed by the Forum.

**M16 Supporting transgender and non-binary young members**

We have continued to publicise UNISON's work on trans equality to young members, including via the LGBT+ young members network. One of the sessions at Young Members Conference 2023 will be on Becoming a Trans Ally. As part of our briefing for regional staff working with young members we highlighted the success of the trans ally training programme and encouraged regions to schedule sessions on this issue.

**Composite A A National Organising Strategy For Young Members**

The young members' national organising strategy continues to be a priority area of work for the National Young Members Forum. Building on our 2020 report 'Getting Active in UNISON' we hope to develop further guidance and a more worked-through strategy in the New Year. We hold regular briefings with staff working with Regional Young Members Forum including an all-day strategy briefing this year at which we discussed the priorities for a young members organising strategy and shared examples of good practice. We consulted with RYMFs on the age limit for young members in UNISON and moved a rule change accordingly, which was supported by national delegate conference. We now intend to build on this rule change as an organising opportunity and develop more detailed guidance.



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